Studies in Early Medieval Britain and Ireland

Bede and the Future

Edited by
PETER DARBY and
FAITH WALLIS

BEDE AND THE FUTURE

Studies in Early Medieval Britain and Ireland

Series editors:

Joanna E. Story, University of Leicester, UK,
Roy Flechner, University College Dublin, Ireland

Studies in Early Medieval Britain and Ireland illuminates the history of Britain and Ireland from the start of the fifth century to the establishment of French-speaking aristocracies in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, for historians, archaeologists, philologists and literary and cultural scholars. It explores the origins of British society, of communities, and political, administrative and ecclesiastical institutions. It was in the early middle ages that the English, Welsh, Scots and Irish defined and distinguished themselves in language, customs and territory and the successive conquests and settlements lent distinctive Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian and Norman elements to the British ethnic mix. Royal dynasties were established and the landscape took a form that can still be recognised today; it was then too that Christian churches were established with lasting results for our cultural, moral, legal and intellectual horizons.

Studies in Early Medieval Britain and Ireland reveals these roots and makes them accessible to a wide readership of scholars, students and lay people.

Other titles in the series

Heaven and Earth in Anglo-Saxon England
Theology and Society in an Age of Faith
Helen Foxhall Forbes

Bede and the End of Time
Peter Darby

Women's Names in Old English
Elisabeth Okasha

Bede and the Future

Edited by

PETER DARBY
University of Nottingham, UK

and

FAITH WALLIS
McGill University, Canada

ASHGATE

© Peter Darby and Faith Wallis 2014

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher.

Peter Darby and Faith Wallis have asserted their right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as the editors of this work.

Published by
Ashgate Publishing Limited
Wey Court East
Union Road
Farnham
Surrey, GU9 7PT
England

Ashgate Publishing Company
110 Cherry Street
Suite 3-1
Burlington, VT 05401-3818
USA

www.ashgate.com

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

The Library of Congress has cataloged the printed edition as follows:
Bede and the Future / edited by Peter Darby and Faith Wallis.
pages cm. – (Studies in Early Medieval Britain and Ireland) (Why did Bede write a commentary on Revelation? / Faith Wallis – Why did heresy matter to Bede? present and future contexts / Alan Thacker – Separation anxiety: Bede and threats to Wearmouth and Jarrow / Christopher Grocock – Bede and Islam / Calvin B. Kendall – Bede's history of the future / Peter Darby – The ends and futures of Bede's De temporum ratione / James T. Palmer – Christology and the future in Bede's Annus Domini / Mairmn Mac Carron – Quae res quem sit habitura finem, posterior aetas videbit: prosperity, adversity, and Bede's hope for the future of Northumbria / Paul C. Hilliard – Visions of reform: Bede's later writings in context / Scott Degregorio)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
1. Bede, the Venerable, Saint, 673-735. 2. Future, The. I. Darby, Peter. II. Wallis, Faith.
BR754.B38B43 2014
270.2092–dc23 2014012042

ISBN 9781409451822 (hbk)
ISBN 9781409451839 (ebk-PDF)
ISBN 9781472406750 (ebk-ePUB)

Contents

Foreword *vii*
Acknowledgements *ix*
Notes on Contributors *xi*
Abbreviations *xiii*
Conventions *xv*

Introduction: The Many Futures of Bede 1
Peter Darby and Faith Wallis

1 Why did Bede Write a Commentary on Revelation? 23
Faith Wallis

2 Why did Heresy Matter to Bede? Present and Future Contexts 47
Alan Thacker

3 Separation Anxiety: Bede and Threats to Wearmouth and Jarrow 67
Christopher Grocock

4 Bede and Islam 93
Calvin B. Kendall

5 Bede's History of the Future 115
Peter Darby

6 The Ends and Futures of Bede's *De temporum ratione* 139
James T. Palmer

7 Christology and the Future in Bede's *Annus Domini* 161
Máirín Mac Carron

8 *Quae res Quem sit Habitura Finem, Posterior Aetas Videbit*: Prosperity, Adversity and Bede's Hope for the Future of Northumbria 181
Paul C. Hilliard

9 Visions of Reform: Bede's Later Writings in Context 207
Scott DeGregorio

Bibliography *233*
Index *263*

Foreword

This book on *Bede and the Future* marks both a beginning and an end.

It is the first that appears under the new series title, *Studies in Early Medieval Britain and Ireland* (*SEMBI*). This evolution of our title reflects an early medieval reality, since the cultural, intellectual, and political histories of the islands of Britain and Ireland between the fifth and twelfth centuries were closely linked. It also reflects the vibrance of contemporary, twenty first-century scholarship on the early middle ages; the augmented series title offers a new publishing opportunity for academic books that focus on early medieval Ireland as well as those that explore the lives and ideas of the peoples who lived in the island of Britain in the medieval centuries before AD 1100, and the connections of all these people and places with the wider world. The move to *Studies in Early Medieval Britain and Ireland*, and the addition Dr Roy Flechner as a second General Editor, was enthusiastically welcomed by Professor Nicholas Brooks, the founding editor of the series, at the meeting of the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists that met in Dublin in August 2013. Sadly, Nicholas died in February 2014, and his erudition and avuncular care for the subject is much missed by the global early medieval community. Nicholas was especially proud of the series that is now published by Ashgate, and always intended it to be a vehicle for the publication of ground-breaking scholarship – both monographs and edited collections – by new scholars as well as those with established academic reputations. He was keen for it to embrace all disciplines (history, archaeology, language, literature) that contribute to our knowledge of Britain in the long period between the collapse of Roman imperial authority and the establishment of French-speaking aristocracies in different areas in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and for the focal length of published studies to extend beyond the boundaries of Anglo-Saxon England. The current editors of the series remain committed to this vision and welcome proposals from scholars, old and new, for *Studies in Early Medieval Britain and Ireland*.

Bede and the Future is a most appropriate book to launch this new phase of the series. The early medieval connections between the islands of Britain and Ireland are especially well illustrated in the essays that follow here. Northumbria in the later seventh century was steeped in the heritage of Christian Ireland

through the Irish monks who established their missionary base under royal patronage at Lindisfarne, close to the Bernician palace at Bamburgh. Bede lived his whole life in the Rome-centred monastery at Wearmouth Jarrow but his respect for the Irish churchmen who had nurtured Northumbrian Christianity comes through in all his writing. Although he disagreed profoundly with the Paschal practices of some in Ireland, his understanding of *computus* – the science of time reckoning in the past, present *and* future – was dependent in large part on his knowledge of Irish texts on the topic. The nine essays in this book, edited by Dr Peter Darby and Professor Faith Wallis, concentrate on the evolution of Bede's thinking about future time over the course of thirty years in the early decades of the eighth century, between the publication of his first treatise *De temporibus* in 703 and his last, polemical, letter to Bishop Ecgberht of York in 734. Our authors reveal how Bede's explications of Scripture, his observations on the patterns of the natural world, his investigations into chronology, and his historical writing were linked by a coherent theology concerning the future fate not just of the people of Northumbria but of Christians everywhere. His profound insights into the nature of time and the unknowability of the End of Time permeate his diverse writings, illustrating both the reach of his own scholarly research (learning from recent authors as well as the Patristic Fathers) and also the influence of his own ideas across Europe in the eighth-century and beyond. This collection will be of great value to students and scholars alike, with interests in the intellectual history of the early middle ages and on the nature of history itself.

JOANNA STORY
The University of Leicester

ROY FLECHNER
University College, Dublin

August 2014

Acknowledgements

This book originated from a pair of sessions on the theme 'Bede and the Future' at the 2011 International Medieval Congress at the University of Leeds. Its midwives were all of the scholars who participated in those sessions, as well as the audiences, whose perspectives and pointed questions sharpened our focus. The debts which the editors have incurred in preparing this volume are many indeed, but at the top of the list must be all of the contributors: in addition to answering our call for their individual chapters, many of them came to our aid with generous advice and helpful ideas. Dr Máirín Mac Carron, in particular, has lent invaluable support during the editorial process and we wish to acknowledge the assistance that she offered in reading drafts of our co-written introductory essay and suggesting ways to improve it. We owe special thanks to Prof. Ian Wood from the University of Leeds, who read some of the work included in this collection in draft form and generously offered advice to the editors, and to Dr Joshua Westgard, who fielded questions about Bede manuscripts from several of the contributors.

We would also like to thank the staff at Ashgate Publishing, and all those who have worked on the production of this book. We are especially grateful to Kirsten Weissenberg for her diligent editorial work, and to Commissioning Editor Tom Gray for offering us a berth in the excellent Studies in Early Medieval Britain and Ireland series. Series Editor Prof. Joanna Story has helped considerably, offering advice to both of us throughout the editorial process and encouraging us to develop the project in the first place; Peter, in particular, owes her an enormous debt of gratitude, and he would like to thank her for the help and encouragement she has given him. Peter would also like to acknowledge the support of the British Academy; their generous award of a Postdoctoral Fellowship for 2010–13 at the University of Leicester allowed him time to develop this project, carry out his share of the editorial work, and see the volume through to completion.

Most important of all to the success of this book and to the sanity of the editors was the faithful and loving support of their families, and we would like to offer our thanks to them here: to Kendall Wallis for his bibliographical virtuosity, his companionship on the road and at home, and his wonderful heart and mind; to Sally Darby, for her support and unwavering optimism;

and to Alice Darby, who was born whilst this book was in production, and to whom it is dedicated with our love and best wishes for the future.

PETER DARBY and FAITH WALLIS

Notes on Contributors

Faith Wallis is Associate Professor in the Department of History and Classical Studies at McGill University (Montreal, Canada); she is cross-appointed in the Department of Social Studies of Medicine in McGill's Medical Faculty. She has translated Bede's *The reckoning of time* (Liverpool University Press, 1999, revised edition 2004), *On the nature of things and On times* (with Calvin B. Kendall, Liverpool University Press, 2010) and *Commentary on Revelation* (Liverpool University Press, 2013). She has published widely on medieval science and medicine. Together with Calvin Kendall, she is preparing a translation of Isidore of Seville's *De natura rerum.*

Alan Thacker is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Historical Research (School of Advanced Study, University of London) and Consultant Editor of the Victoria County History. He has published extensively on the early medieval Church in western Europe. Recent publications include the 2005 Jarrow Lecture: *Bede and Augustine of Hippo: history and figure in sacred text* and 'Patrons of Rome: the cult of Sts Peter and Paul at court and in the city in the fourth and fifth Centuries' (*Early Medieval Europe*, 20).

Christopher Grocock teaches Latin, Greek and Classical Studies at Bedales School (Steep, near Petersfield, Hampshire) but maintains an interest in medieval Latin which began during undergraduate years; he has recently edited, with Ian Wood, the *History of the abbots* and *Homily 1.13* by the Venerable Bede, together with the anonymous *Life of Ceolfrith* and Bede's *Letter to Bishop Ecgberht* for the Oxford Medieval Texts series under the title *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*; earlier publications include editions of *Ruodlieb*, Gilo of Paris' *Historia Hierosolimitana* (Oxford Medieval Texts, co-authored with Elisabeth Siberry) and the Roman culinary recipe text *Apicius* (co-authored with Sally Grainger).

Calvin B. Kendall is Emeritus Professor of English at the University of Minnesota. He has translated Bede's *De arte metrica* and *De schematibus et tropis* (*The art of poetry and rhetoric*, AQ-Verlag, 1991) and edited the critical editions of both texts for the Corpus Christianorum (CCSL 123A). He has also translated Bede's *On the nature of things and On times* (with Faith Wallis, Liverpool University Press, 2010) and *On Genesis* (Liverpool University Press, 2007). He is the author of *The metrical grammar of Beowulf* (Cambridge

University Press, 1991) and *The allegory of the Church: Romanesque portals and their verse inscriptions* (University of Toronto Press, 1998).

Peter Darby is Lecturer in Medieval History at the University of Nottingham, having formerly held a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Leicester (2010–13). He is the author of *Bede and the end of time* (Ashgate, Studies in Early Medieval Britain, 2012), and he has recently published an article on Bede's commentary on the Temple of Solomon (*Early Medieval Europe*, 21).

James T. Palmer is Lecturer in Continental Mediaeval History at the University of St Andrews. He has published widely on early medieval religion and culture, including *Anglo-Saxons in a Frankish World 690–900* (Brepols, 2009). He is currently completing another monograph, *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*, for Cambridge University Press .

Máirín Mac Carron is a National University of Ireland / Dr Garret Fitzgerald Post-doctoral Fellow at NUI Galway, where she is undertaking a research project: 'Bede and the measurement of time'. Her research interests include chronology, computus and the development of the calendar in the medieval world; and women in religious life.

Paul C. Hilliard is Assistant Professor and Chair of the Department of Church History at the University of St. Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary. His doctoral thesis explored the use of sacred and secular history in Bede's writings (University of Cambridge, 2007). He has recently published an essay 'The Venerable Bede as scholar, gentile and preacher', in a collection entitled *Ego trouble: authors and their identities in the early Middle Ages* (Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010).

Scott DeGregorio is Associate Professor of English Literature at the University of Michigan-Dearborn. He has published widely on Bede as exegete and reformer, and has edited two major collections of essays: *Innovation and tradition in the writings of the Venerable Bede* (West Virginia University Press, 2006) and *The Cambridge companion to Bede* (Cambridge University Press, 2010). His translation of Bede's commentary *On Ezra and Nehemiah* (Liverpool University Press, 2006) won the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists' biennial publication prize for best edition or translation (2005–07).

Abbreviations

BEH	*Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English people*, ed. and trans. B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969)
CCCM	Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis (Turnhout: Brepols, 1966–)
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina (Turnhout: Brepols, 1953–)
CPL	*Clavis patrum latinorum*, 3rd edition, E. Dekkers (Steenbrugge: Brepols, 1995)
CSEL	Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (Vienna; Prague; Leipzig: F. Tempsky, *etc.* 1866–)
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historica (Leipzig; Hannover; Berlin: various publishers, 1826–) Auct. ant.– Auctores antiquissimi Capit. – Capitularia regum Francorum Epp. – Epistolae (in Quart) Epp. sel. – Epistolae Selectae QQ zur Geistesgesch. – Quellen zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters SS – Scriptores (in Folio) SS rer. Merov. – Scriptorum rerum Merovingicarum
PL	Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina, ed. J.P. Migne (221 vols, Paris: J.P. Migne and Garnier Frères, 1841–80, with volumes reissued by Garnier to 1905)
VBOH	*Venerabilis Baedae Opera Historica*, ed. C. Plummer (2 vols, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896)

This page has been left blank intentionally

Conventions

Anglo-Saxon personal names are reproduced in accordance with the online Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England database.[1] Citations of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* utilise the text and follow the chapter divisions set out in *BEH*.[2] Biblical citations follow the New International Version and Vulgate unless stated otherwise.[3]

[1] www.pase.ac.uk

[2] Readers may also wish to consult the new critical edition of the *Historia ecclesias-tica*: *Storia degli inglesi*, ed. M. Lapidge, trans. P. Chiesa (2 vols, Rome; Milan: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla; A. Mondadori, 2008–10).

[3] *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Colorado Springs, CO: International Bible Society, 1984); H.F.D. Sparks, W. Thiele and R. Weber, *Biblia sacra iuxta Uulgatam uersionem*, Württembergische Bibelanstalt (Stuttgart, 1975).

This page has been left blank intentionally

Introduction:
The Many Futures of Bede

Peter Darby and Faith Wallis

It is surprisingly difficult to think of Bede as a man who had a future, and who thought about that future. He suffers the fate of those who died long ago (735), and are thus consigned to the one-dimensional world of 'the past'. This is compounded in Bede's case by the overwhelming influence of his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, which provides us with a narrative framework for the early history of Anglo-Saxon England to the year 731 and which preserves information about so many people and events from that period which might otherwise have been lost. In the autobiographical list of writings presented at the end of the *Historia ecclesiastica* (5.24), Bede explicitly designates some of his other works as 'histories' (i.e. narrative accounts): the *Historia abbatum*, a compact chronicle of the development of Bede's own monastery at Wearmouth-Jarrow from its foundation down to September 716;[1] and a group of texts 'concerning the histories of the saints' (*de historiis sanctorum*), which includes *Vitae* for the third-century confessor Felix of Nola and the Persian martyr Anastasius (d. 628) and two for Cuthbert of Melrose/Lindisfarne (d. 687).[2] These works seem to be 'histories' in our eyes because they deal with events which from our perspective are unequivocally past, but we would do well to remember that for Bede the final chapters of the *Historia abbatum* were reportage of current events, as were the accounts of Cuthbert's ongoing miracles.[3] The other meaning of *historia*

---

[1] A new edition and translation of the *Historia abbatum* has recently been published: C.W. Grocock and I.N. Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow* (Oxford, 2013).

[2] For an introductory overview of each of these texts see G.H. Brown, *A companion to Bede* (Woodbridge, 2009), 76–85 and see further: T.W. Mackay, 'Bede's hagiographical method: his knowledge and use of Paulinus of Nola', in *Famulus Christi*, ed. G. Bonner (London, 1976), 77–92; C.V. Franklin and P. Meyvaert, 'Has Bede's version of the *Passio S. Anastasii* come down to us in BHL 408?' *Analecta Bollandiana*, 100 (1982), 373–400; M. Lapidge, 'Bede's metrical *Vita S. Cuthberti*', in *St. Cuthbert, his cult and his community to AD 1200*, eds G. Bonner, D.W. Rollason and C. Stancliffe (Woodbridge, 1989), 77–93.

[3] On Bede's understanding of the miraculous, see: W.D. McCready, *Miracles and the Venerable Bede* (Toronto, ON, 1994); K. Lutterkort, '*Beda Hagiographicus*: meaning and function of miracle

was 'description', and thus histories could be of present conditions, but it is still hard to detach Bede from the past, because in addition to those overtly historical works, Bede spent much of his career looking back in time, to the Old Testament and New Testament eras in his many works of exegesis, and to more recent phases of Christian history in his martyrology and two world chronicles.[4]

Bede was not, however, motivated to study the biblical and Christian past solely (or even primarily) by antiquarian curiosity; rather he looked to the biblical and post-biblical periods with one eye on the time to come, in the hope that those who read his works would understand God's message and divine plan more fully and, by learning from historical *exempla*, give themselves a greater chance of being counted amongst the righteous at the Day of Judgement.[5] A desire for salvation – both collective and individual – drives Bede's intellectual programme and connects together many of his historical and non-historical writings. This message is encapsulated in one of Bede's best known passages of prose, the account of the council of King Edwin of Northumbria in which an unnamed thegn is credited with a speech which employs the famous simile of a sparrow flying through a hall (*Historia ecclesiastica* 2.13).[6] The speech that Bede puts into the mouth of the thegn makes the point that past and future are equally mysterious: though the sparrow enters the hall by one window and exits by another, it comes from and goes into the same dark and turbulent night. The thegn argued that if the new faith can give 'certain knowledge' of past and future, it was worth embracing.

Recent publications, not least the indispensable 2006 volume *Innovation and tradition in the writings of the Venerable Bede*, have done a great deal to promote the view that Bede was very actively involved with the world in which he lived; Bede emerges from its pages as a man whose authority expanded over his lifetime, and who moreover was fully aware of the magnitude of his own

stories in the *Vita Cuthberti* and the *Historia ecclesiastica*', in *Beda Venerabilis: historian, monk and Northumbrian*, eds L.A.J.R. Houwen and A.A. MacDonald (Groningen, 1996), 81–106.

[4] For the *Martyrologium* see: A.T. Thacker, 'Bede and his martyrology', in *'Listen, O Isles, unto me'*, eds E. Mullins and D. Scully (Cork, 2011), 126–41. On the chronicles: F. Wallis, *Bede: The reckoning of time*, revised 2nd edition (Liverpool, 2004), 353–66.

[5] J. Davidse, 'The sense of history in the works of the Venerable Bede', *Studi Medievali*, 23 (1982), 647–95; A.T. Thacker, 'Bede and the ordering of understanding', in *Innovation and tradition in the writings of the Venerable Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Morgantown, WV, 2006), 37–63.

[6] M.F. Schuster, 'Bede and the sparrow simile', *American Benedictine Review*, 8 (1957), 46–50; D. Shanzer, 'Bede's style: a neglected historiographical model for the style of the *Historia ecclesiastica*?' in *Source of wisdom*, eds C.D. Wright, F.M. Biggs and T.N. Hall (Toronto, ON, 2007), 329–52.

contribution to Christian Latin learning.[7] Much contemporary scholarship considers Bede to be an engaged author caught up in the controversies of the early-eighth century world that he inhabited, and as someone who actively attempted to influence that world through his writings.[8] A well-known example of this is the comprehensive programme of ecclesiastical reform promoted across the prose *Vita Cuthberti* and several of Bede's later biblical commentaries.[9] Bede's reforming impulses were inspired by the circumstances of his day, and his calls for change undoubtedly spoke directly to his contemporary Northumbrian readership, but they also connect to his hopes and fears for the future of the ecclesiastical landscape of Anglo-Saxon England, of Christians and the Christian Church more broadly and even of his own monastery.

There are at least two ways in which Bede's attitudes toward and ideas about the future might be analysed, and hence more than one order in which the contributions to this volume might be read. In fact, Bede looked out on many futures. These could be visualised as concentric rings of concern, radiating outwards from his immediate environment to the farthest reaches of creation. Depending on what he was writing, to whom and when, Bede might turn his attention to the immediate and essentially predictable future, or to the less determinate and free-floating future, for example, the looming problem of heresy, or the threat posed by the Saracens, that was always impending but never quite in sight. The ultimate future of the end-times – the 'sacred future' – was at once unpredictable in temporal terms, and sharply mapped out in terms of its events. These different futures are linked to different vantage points, radiating outwards from Wearmouth-Jarrow, to Northumbria and to the English Church and people, to the universal Christian Church and, finally, to the created world itself.

Another way to unfold the many futures of Bede is to see these various concerns as emerging, submerging and re-emerging over his lifetime, as different circumstances impinged on his awareness, and as his confidence in his own voice grew. We have chosen to order the essays in *Bede and the Future* in broadly chronological order, and through this introduction, to set them into biographical

[7] S. DeGregorio (ed.), *Innovation and tradition in the writings of the Venerable Bede* (Morgantown, WV, 2006). For Bede's understanding of his own importance see especially the introduction by DeGregorio and the essays by Ray, DeGregorio and Thacker.

[8] Most recently, see: P.N. Darby, 'Bede, Iconoclasm and the Temple of Solomon', *Early Medieval Europe*, 21 (2013), 390–421.

[9] A.T. Thacker, 'Bede's ideal of reform', in *Ideal and reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon society*, eds P. Wormald, D. Bullough and R. Collins (Oxford, 1983), 130–53; S. DeGregorio, "*Nostrorum socordiam temporum*": the reforming impulse of Bede's later exegesis', *Early Medieval Europe*, 11 (2002), 107–22; S. DeGregorio, 'Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam* and the reform of the Northumbrian Church', *Speculum*, 79 (2004), 1–25.

context. Our decision was influenced by a number of considerations, including the potential usefulness of this collection for teaching, but it also expresses our conviction that the next great task in Bede studies will be a synthetic intellectual biography of the man set against the latest scholarship on his milieu and his age. For these reasons, we invite the reader to consider the many futures of Bede as and when they emerged in his writings, while bearing in mind the different registers or vantage-points from which those futures could be considered.

Bede's Early Life

Reflecting on how Bede's ideas about the future shifted over his career also serves to remind us that Bede himself was once young, with his future still before him, and that he eventually grew old and increasingly concerned with the world he would not live to see. Bede considered the three major pleasures of his life to have been 'to learn, to teach and to write'.[10] His formative years were spent immersed in the first two of those activities, benefitting from the guidance of his own tutors[11] and his ready access to the Wearmouth-Jarrow library (so far as we know the richest collection established anywhere in Anglo-Saxon England at the time).[12] Bede entered the monastic life when he was given to the community at Wearmouth as a seven year old boy in *c.* 680.[13] He must have witnessed many of the major events of the early history of his monastery at first hand in his childhood and adolescence, including the return of Benedict Biscop, the founder and first abbot of the monastery at Wearmouth, from an overseas voyage laden with paintings and books for St Peter's Church (*c.* 680); the building of the sister monastery dedicated to St Paul at Jarrow; the appointment of Ceolfrith to serve as abbot of the community established at the new site; the ceremony to mark the dedication of St Paul's Church in 685; the plague which decimated Northumbria in *c.* 686 and accounted for the deaths of many Wearmouth-Jarrow brethren, but not the

[10] *Historia ecclesiastica* (eds B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors, *BEH*), 5.24: 'semper aut discere aut docere aut scribere dulce habui'.

[11] Bede identifies Benedict Biscop and Ceolfrith as the individuals responsible for overseeing his education in *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24. Trumberht (a monk educated at Lastingham) is named as one of the brothers who taught Bede the Scriptures, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.3. See further: D. Whitelock, 'Bede his teachers and friends', in *Famulus Christi*, ed. Bonner, 19–39.

[12] M. Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon library* (Oxford, 2006), 34–7. See further: M.L.W. Laistner, 'The library of the Venerable Bede', in *Bede, his life, times, and writings*, ed. A.H. Thompson (Oxford, 1935), 237–66; R. Love, 'The library of the Venerable Bede', in *The history of the book in Britain, vol. I c. 400–1100*, ed. R. Gameson (Cambridge, 2011), 606–32.

[13] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24.

teenaged Bede nor his mentor Ceolfrith; Benedict's return from another overseas journey with various treasures for St Paul's; the establishment of Ceolfrith as head of a now unified monastery of Wearmouth and Jarrow in May 688; and the death of Benedict in January 689 after a period of debilitating illness.[14]

In these formative years of Bede's life the physical landscapes of the Wearmouth and Jarrow sites were transformed before his eyes.[15] Bede's monastery, backed by considerable wealth and royal patronage, developed into one of the foremost centres of Christian culture in Britain, and as part of the Northumbrian 'coastal highway' the sites were important hubs for commercial activity.[16] Through the port of Jarrow, which had strong connections to King Ecgfrith of Northumbria (r. 670–685), luxury items from other continents arrived at Bede's monastery including pepper and incense.[17] A steady stream of important visitors were drawn into Bede's immediate environment in these years, such as the members of the Northumbrian ruling elites who maintained close relationships with Benedict and Ceolfrith throughout their respective abbacies, and Adomnán, the abbot of Iona who came to Wearmouth-Jarrow to meet with Ceolfrith in the late 680s.[18] We are often inclined to imagine Bede's life as one of peaceful reclusiveness, not least because that is the impression that he chose to present of it himself in the autobiographical summary of his career given in *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.24, but the transformations that occurred in this formative phase

[14] Bede, *Historia abbatum* (ed. C. Plummer, *VBOH*, I, 364–87), 6–13; Anonymous, *Vita Ceolfridi* (ed. C. Plummer, *VBOH*, I, 388–404), 9–18. See further: P.H. Blair, *The world of Bede*, revised 2nd edition (Cambridge, 1990), 165–83; I.N. Wood, 'The foundation of Bede's Wearmouth-Jarrow', in *The Cambridge companion to Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Cambridge, 2010), 84–96.

[15] Comprehensive archaeological reports for both sites have been published: R. Cramp, *Wearmouth and Jarrow monastic sites* (2 vols, Swindon, 2005–06).

[16] C. Ferguson, 'Re-evaluating early medieval Northumbrian contacts and the 'coastal highway'', in *Early Medieval Northumbria: kingdoms and communities, AD 450–1100*, eds D. Petts and S. Turner (Turnhout, 2011), 283–302.

[17] *Piperum* and *incensa* are amongst the personal possessions attributed to Bede in the *Epistola Cuthberti de obitu Bedae*; pepper had medicinal and culinary uses: *De temporum ratione* (ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123B, 263–544), 30. Incense was burnt during church services or important ceremonies (e.g. the departure of Ceolfrith, *Historia abbatum* 17). On the connections between Ecgfrith and Jarrow, see: I.N. Wood, *The origins of Jarrow; the monastery, the slake and Ecgfrith's minster*, Bede's World Studies 1 (Jarrow, 2008).

[18] On the relationships between Benedict, Ceolfrith and the ruling elites of Northumbria, see: I.N. Wood, 'The gifts of Wearmouth and Jarrow', in *The languages of gift in the Early Middle Ages*, eds W. Davies and P. Fouracre (Cambridge, 2010), 89–115. The visit of Adomnán of Iona is recorded in *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.21.

must have seemed thrilling to the young Bede; it was a period which presented him with endless possibilities for the future.

Texts in Time

The fruits of Bede's prodigious literary career are summarised in a list of texts appended to the retrospective account of his own life presented in *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.24. That list is ordered thematically, rather than chronologically, and gives us very little direct information about the sequence of composition. The collection is dominated by Bede's many works of exegesis, listed in the canonical sequence of the sections of the Bible that they examine, but it also contains a book of letters; a collection of poems and hymns; and texts on time, nature and the Latin language. The overwhelming majority of Bede's writings were issued in the 28-year period that spanned his ordination to the priesthood in 703 to the completion of the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* in 731. It is sometimes supposed that the paired treatises on Latin grammar and style, *De arte metrica* and *De schematibus et tropis*, were issued before Bede became priest in 703, although this position is by no means universally accepted.[19]

Sorting Bede's works into chronological order is not a straightforward task: it is often difficult to assign individual writings to a specific year of composition; in some cases there are no obvious *termini* to guide us one way or the other as to whether a work is early or late; and the matter is further complicated by the likelihood that at least some of Bede's major texts were put together over a period of many years (this was certainly true of the commentary on Genesis).[20]

---

[19] Bede's use of the term *conlevita* (fellow deacon), which he assigns to a certain Cuthbert, the dedicatee of *De arte metrica*, has often been cited as evidence that Bede himself was not yet a priest at the time of writing: *De arte metrica* (ed. C.B. Kendall, CCSL 123A, 82–141), 25, lines 26–36; C. Plummer, *VBOH*, I, cxlv; R. Davis, 'Bede's early reading', *Speculum*, 8 (1933), 179–95, at 184–94; M.L.W. Laistner and H.H. King, *A hand-list of Bede manuscripts* (Ithaca, NY, 1943), 131–2; Blair, *World of Bede*, 249–50. The assumption has been challenged by M. Irvine, 'Bede the grammarian and the scope of grammatical studies in eighth-century Northumbria', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 15 (1986), 15–43, at 41–3; and A. Holder, '(Un)dating Bede's *De arte metrica*', in *Northumbria's golden age*, eds J. Hawkes and S. Mills (Stroud, 1999), 390–95. See further: N. Wright, 'The metrical art(s) of Bede', in *Latin learning and English lore: studies in Anglo-Saxon literature for Michael Lapidge*, eds K. O'Brien O'Keeffe and A. Orchard (2 vols, Toronto, ON, 2005), I, 149–70; C.V. Franklin, 'The date of composition of Bede's *De schematibus et tropis* and *De arte metrica*', *Revue Bénédictine*, 110 (2000), 199–203.

[20] The sequence of composition of Bede's writings is considered in the introduction to the parallel Latin–Italian edition of the *Historia ecclesiastica* by Michael Lapidge and Paolo Chiesa:

It is, however, possible to make sense of the overarching sequence of many of Bede's writings by referring to six important milestones for his career: the year 703, in which Bede was ordained to the priesthood at the age of thirty;[21] 708, the year in which Bede learned of and responded to an accusation of heresy made against him;[22] 4 June 716, the date of Ceolfrith's departure from Wearmouth-Jarrow, by which point Bede had completed three of the four books of his commentary on 1 Samuel;[23] 725, the year in which Bede issued his second tract on time, *De temporum ratione*;[24] 731, the given year of completion for the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*;[25] and 25 May 735, the date of Bede's death as recorded by the *Epistola Cuthberti de obitu Beda*.[26] These five loosely-defined phases of between four and nine years duration each, although they are to some extent artificial constructs, nevertheless offer a helpful way of grouping together some of the texts whose dates of completion are known to be roughly contemporaneous with each other. They also mark significant milestones in his emerging thought about the future, or rather, about different kinds of futurity.

1. 703–708

After spending his formative years learning and teaching, writing – Bede's third major pleasure – seems to have developed into a serious occupation around the time of his ordination to the priesthood in the year 703. The transition from learner-teacher to learner-teacher-author was marked in that year with the issuing of *De temporibus*, a brief treatise on the measurement of time which

Storia degli inglesi (2 vols, Rome; Milan, 2008–10), I, xlii–lviii. The stages of composition of *In Genesim* are explained by C.B. Kendall, *Bede: On Genesis* (Liverpool, 2007), 40–53.

[21] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24.

[22] The episode is documented in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* (ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123C, 617–26), which was written five years after *De temporibus*, a tract issued in 703 (ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123C, 585–611).

[23] *Historia abbatum*, 17 records that Ceolfrith left Wearmouth-Jarrow the day before the nones (5th) of June, a Thursday (*pridie nonas Junias, Quinta feria*). Bede took a break from his work on 1 Samuel after finishing Book 3 of his commentary; that break is documented at the beginning of Book 4: *In primam partem Samuhelis* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119, 5–287), 4, lines 1–22.

[24] *De temporum ratione*, 49, 52 and 58.

[25] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.23.

[26] The *Epistola Cuthberti de obitu Bedae* (eds B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors, *BEH*, 580–87) explains that Bede died on the evening before Ascension Day in 735. In that year Ascension Day fell on Thursday 26 May: C.R. Cheney and M. Jones, *A handbook of dates for students of British History* (Cambridge, 2000), 208.

was primarily written for the benefit of Bede's own students and colleagues.[27] This deceptively modest textbook represents a remarkable convergence of perspectives about time: the units of cyclic present time, the methods for determining future times (particularly for Easter), and the structuring of past time in a universal chronicle extending to Bede's own day, and theoretically extensible into the indefinite future. The completion of *De temporibus* more or less coincided with the publication of two other projects which were also originally conceived with Bede's students and peers at Wearmouth-Jarrow in mind: a treatise on nature, *De natura rerum*, and a commentary on the Book of Revelation, *Expositio Apocalypseos*.[28] The three texts share a stylistic brevity uncommon to Bede's later works (compare, for example, the curt sentences and short chapters presented in *De temporibus* with the more discursive style adopted in *De temporum ratione*, or the *commaticum* style of exegesis primarily employed in *Expositio Apocalypseos* with the more complex mode of discourse employed in Bede's major commentaries on the Old Testament).

In this foundational phase of his career, Bede chose to present a new vision for time and nature across three separate treatises, one of which is explicitly on the subject of time, another on nature and another which offers an interpretation of an eschatological prophecy which connects it to the biblical and ecclesial past and present. This policy of issuing short, discrete tracts once again distinguishes Bede's early works from his later scholarship; when he returned to these subjects in 725 Bede tackled them in a more complex and ambitious manner by writing a single volume in which the three themes overlap and bleed into each other. That is not to say that Bede's early writings on time and the natural world did not present a sophisticated position or, indeed, any new ideas: recent assessments of the three texts have stressed their interconnectedness, complementary natures and thematic unity, and they have also shown that the trilogy advocated a novel understanding of time, the cosmos and the apocalypse which was necessary in light of the abundant misconceptions about those subjects circulating in Anglo-Saxon England at the time of writing.[29]

---

[27] *De temporibus*, 14 (date of composition); *De temporum ratione*, preface, lines 1–6 (on the origins of *De temporibus* as a text to support teaching at Wearmouth-Jarrow).

[28] *Expositio Apocalypseos* (ed. R. Gryson, CCSL 121A) is dedicated to Hwætberht, a fellow monk who would later become Ceolfrith's successor as Abbot of Wearmouth-Jarrow, using the cognomen 'Eusebius': preface, line 3 (see *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 12–20 for the identification of Hwætberht as Eusebius). *De natura rerum* (ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123A, 189–234) is described as having been written first and foremost for Bede's students in the preface to *De temporum ratione*.

[29] P.N. Darby, 'Bede's time shift of 703 in context', in *Abendländische Apokalyptik. Kompendium zur Genealogie der Endzeit*, eds V. Wieser, C. Zolles, C. Feik, M. Zolles and L.

Those misconceptions were especially important in the genesis of Bede's commentary on Revelation, as the opening chapter of this volume by Faith Wallis shows. Bede's choice of the Book of Revelation as his first exegetical project demonstrates that his interest in the time to come was already acutely developed at the very start of his career as an exegete; that interest would be maintained right through to the very end of his life, even if his expectations for what would happen at the end of time would be adjusted in subsequent years.[30] Wallis points out that Bede's decision to compose a commentary on Revelation was a striking one for a novice exegete. Revelation is a notoriously difficult book, with diffuse and uneven patristic coverage, and its interpretation was complicated by debates over precisely what it 'revealed'.[31] Bede followed in the footsteps of Tyconius, for whom the book was a pageant of images designed to convey the historic situation of the Church in the time between Christ's ascension and his Second Coming.[32] The recapitulative or repetitive structure of the book indicated that its meaning lay in the trials that the Church had already endured, was enduring now, and would endure again for the indefinite future. It contained no clues as to when the final age of history would end. Wallis argues that Bede elected to comment on Revelation sometime around 703 precisely because the opening of the eighth century triggered a sort of countdown fever: according to the conventional *Annus Mundi* chronology of Jerome and Isidore, the year 6000 would arrive in 800 CE, a mere hundred years away.

2. 708–716

The fever was so pervasive that Bede himself was accused of heresy for having proposed, in his *De temporibus*, a new *Annus Mundi* reckoning that would obviate it. Bede's *Epistola ad Pleguinam* documents this accusation of heresy,

Schlöndorff (Berlin, 2013), 619–40; C.B. Kendall and F. Wallis, *Bede: On the nature of things and On times* (Liverpool, 2010), 1–7; F. Wallis, *Bede: Commentary on Revelation* (Liverpool, 2013), 39–57.

[30] On the development of Bede's eschatological thought over time see further: P.N. Darby, *Bede and the end of time* (Farnham, 2012); Wallis, *Commentary on Revelation*, 73–81.

[31] P. Fredriksen, 'Apocalypse and redemption in Early Christianity: from John of Patmos to Augustine of Hippo', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 45 (1991), 151–83; B. McGinn, 'Introduction: John's Apocalypse and the apocalyptic mentality', in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, eds R.K. Emmerson and B. McGinn (Ithaca, 1992), 3–19; E.A. Matter, 'Exegesis of the Apocalypse in the early Middle Ages', in *The Year 1000: religious and social response to the turning of the millennium*, ed. M. Frassetto (New York, NY, 2002), 29–40.

[32] P. Fredriksen, 'Tyconius and the end of the world', *Revue des Études Augustiniennes*, 28 (1982), 59–75.

which came to Bede's attention in the year 708. The letter relates that an unnamed accuser had alleged that Bede had denied Christ's coming in the sixth age of the world in *De temporibus*, a position that even a cursory glance at the text in question reveals to be plainly untenable.[33] In the *Chronica minora*, an account of the history of the world from Creation to the present day which occupies the final chapters of *De temporibus*, Bede had divided historical time into six distinct world ages. In doing so, he had restructured the reckoning of each age by employing the chronological data preserved in the Vulgate version of the Bible as opposed to the Septuagint, a decision which reduced the amount of time commonly thought to have elapsed between Creation and Christ's Incarnation, the marking point for the start of the sixth and final world age. Bede placed the Incarnation near to the end of a fourth millennium (*Annus Mundi* 3952), but the prevailing orthodoxy of the time reckoned it to have happened in around *Annus Mundi* 5199. The mistake made by Bede's accuser was to conflate world ages with thousand-year epochs. Bede had placed the Incarnation at the beginning of the sixth *aetas saeculi* but not at the beginning of the sixth millennium; in the mind of his accuser, that clearly amounted to a denial of Christ's coming in the sixth age of the world. Needless to say Bede was extremely angry when he learned about the false charge made against him. After pondering the issue for just two days, he wrote to an acquaintance named Plegwine to protest his innocence vigorously. In the course of defending himself Bede dismantled a number of contemporary misconceptions about the last days and spelled out an orthodox understanding of the time to come which is thoroughly divorced from any attempts to calculate the timing of the apocalypse.

Contact with the wider Northumbrian world is one of the defining developments of this phase of Bede's career: some of the commentaries on the New Testament undertaken in this period are addressed not to Bede's fellow resident of Wearmouth-Jarrow Hwætberht, as *Expositio Apocalypseos* had been, but rather directly to Bishop Acca.[34] The episode documented in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* represents a watershed of sorts for the development of Bede's understanding of time, particularly the relationship between past, present and future. The incident acted as a catalyst, spurring Bede on to tighten up his

[33] The birth of Christ is designated as the starting point for the sixth *aetas saeculi* at *De temporibus*, 16, lines 16–20 and 22, lines 2–7.

[34] *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum* (ed. M.L.W. Laistner, CCSL 121, 3–99), preface, lines 1–2 *In Lucae evangelium expositio* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 120, 5–425), prologue, lines 79–80. A tract on 1 John, which forms part of a larger collection on the seven Catholic Epistles, was also sent to Acca in this period, as was the commentary on Revelation (*Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, preface, lines 6–10 and 76–9).

existing position that the end of time cannot be calculated,[35] but also to build upon that position by developing new ideas of his own.[36] The New Testament commentaries presented ample opportunities to engage with eschatological themes: the commentary on Acts engages with the Prophecy of Joel (Joel 2.28–32; repeated in Acts 2.17–21); *In epistulas septem catholicas* contains a treatise on the intensely apocalyptic third chapter of the second epistle of Peter, as well as on the eschatological messages of 1 John; the tract on Luke's Gospel contains a detailed exegesis of the 'Little Apocalypse' prophesied by Jesus on the Mount of Olives (Luke 21). Through those writings Bede ensured that his views on the future were transmitted directly to Bishop Acca, removing the possibility that his message could be distorted by misunderstandings or malicious rumours. Though the actual resolution of the Plegwine episode is nowhere recorded, it is clear that Acca became established as the principal patron of Bede's writings, a role that he kept up until he was driven from his see in 731.[37]

3. 716–725

Acca was evidently a careful and critical reader of Bede's writings from the time of his elevation to the see of Hexham onwards, but in the next phase of Bede's career the dynamic between Bede and his bishop seems to have developed substantially. Some of Bede's writings compiled in and around the year 716 show a new side to their relationship, with Acca asking questions of Bede not to contest the ideas that he had come across in his reading, but to fill in gaps in his own knowledge for the sake of intellectual curiosity, and to ensure that his own views were in line with the prevailing orthodoxies of the time (as understood by, and as defined by Bede). These circumstances account for the composition of two short tracts which were written whilst Bede was working on his exegesis of the Book of 1 Samuel. Both of those tracts, which are known by the titles *De mansionibus filiorum Israel* and *De eo quod ait Isaias*, respond to questions put to Bede by Acca following the latter's reading of parts of the (as yet unfinished) commentary on Samuel. For our present purposes, it is the second of these works which is more significant. *De eo quod ait Isaias* sets out Bede's response to a question that Acca put to him concerning the following pericope: 'They will

---

[35] This view had been expressed in the very last sentence of *De temporibus* (22, line 80), and it was forcefully reiterated at length in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*.

[36] For example, the expanded world ages framework, which includes a seventh age of rest running parallel to historical time and an eternal post-Judgement eighth *aetas saeculi*; see further: Darby, *Bede and the end of time*, 62–91.

[37] *Continuatio Bedae* (eds B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors, *BEH*, 572–7), *s.a.* 731.

be gathered together as in the gathering of one bundle into the pit, and they will be shut up there in prison: and after many days they will be visited'.[38] Bede had mentioned this passage in the third book of *In primam partem Samuhelis* in the context of a discussion of the nature of the punishment that the damned will be subjected to after the Day of Judgement.[39] In the tract on Isaiah Bede explains that, although some patristic commentators had used the pericope in question to suggest that the phrase 'they will be visited' (*visitabuntur*) might offer the devil and his associates hope of some respite from their punishments, that view is mistaken because the penalties (and indeed the rewards) doled out at the Final Judgement will never be diminished in any way. This episode reveals that Bede was now recognised as a substantial theological authority by Acca, and that his reputation at least partially rested on an ability to interpret ambiguous prophetic statements about the future safely. The interchange between Bede and Acca also alerts us to the level of concern about eschatological issues in Bede's milieu, and the lack of clarity even among the clerical elite as to what the future would hold.

The completion of Bede's monumental *In primam partem Samuhelis* in late 716 (or very soon thereafter) signalled some important developments in Bede's exegetical method.[40] The commentary on 1 Samuel was written at a time of great instability, with significant changes taking place in the year 716 that affected Wearmouth-Jarrow (the aforementioned departure of Abbot Ceolfrith), the kingdom of Northumbria (death of King Osred and replacement by Cenred) and the wider Anglo-Saxon world (accession of Æthelbald in Mercia). These various developments brought with them anxiety about the immediate and longer term futures, and Bede's concerns about both aspects reverberate throughout *In primam partem Samuhelis*.[41] The 'future', in short, is not confined to the divinely driven agenda of the end times, but assumes a moral and pastoral complexion that engages all Christians. Although the subject matter for *In primam partem Samuhelis* was drawn from the distant biblical past, the

[38] Isaiah 24.22 (Douay-Rheims).

[39] *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, lines 998–1013.

[40] The written style of the commentary on 1 Samuel is noticeably more complex than those found in Bede's earlier works of New Testament exegesis: the average length of a sentence in *In primam partem Samuhelis* is 31 words; this compares to 18 in *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 22 in *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum* and 23 in *In Lucae evangelium expositio*. With the exception of the calculation for *Expositio Apocalypseos*, figures cited are from R. Sharpe, 'The varieties of Bede's prose', in *Aspects of the language of Latin prose*, eds T. Reinhardt, M. Lapidge and J.N. Adams (Oxford, 2005), 339–55. *In primam partem Samuhelis* is also notable for its intense allegorising: Laistner and King, *Hand-list*, 65; G.H. Brown, 'Bede's style in his commentary on *I Samuel*', in *Text, image, interpretation*, eds A. Minnis and J. Roberts (Turnhout, 2007), 233–51.

[41] Darby, *Bede and the end of time*, 167–85.

events of the Old Testament had acute relevance for the present day so far as Bede was concerned; the Scriptural narrative, and (by implication) Bede's commentary upon that narrative, were intended to act as correctional forces against contemporary problems, to provide solace during difficult times and to help establish a reformed future.

The commentary on 1 Samuel is much concerned with the themes of faithlessness, sin and heresy, the latter topic serving as a lightning rod for a whole host of present day concerns and future anxieties, as Alan Thacker's essay in this volume demonstrates (Chapter 2). Heresy as Bede conceived it was a global menace: a kind of protean conspiracy that could surface anywhere and at any time, purveyed by faceless 'masters' who seduced the unwary with clever rhetoric, and who might be indistinguishable from orthodox Christians. The connotation of heresy was sufficiently elastic to encompass other dangers, such as dissention and schism, or even failure to live in accordance with Christian standards. 'False brethren' and 'bad Catholics' were even, by implication, found in Bede's own monastery, and they could (it seems) readily co-opt the power of the state. Moreover, Bede appears to have felt that the Church lacked resources to deal with the problem, such as a formula for reconciling penitent heretics. The sense that heretics are already here, and at the same time always on the way, assailing every frontier of the Christian Church, and perhaps heading straight for the lands of the English, comes through especially strongly in works such as *In primam partem Samuhelis* that were written in Bede's maturity, although the subject troubled him in the earlier phases of his career as well.[42] Thacker's essay points out that Bede used the discourse of heresy not just as a device to highlight contemporary ecclesiastical issues, but also as a forum for presenting solutions to some of those problems to help the Church navigate a safe course through its troubled future.

This forwards-facing approach carries over into some of the other major works written at this time, not least the *Historia abbatum* and prose *Vita Cuthberti*.[43] Christopher Grocock's contribution to this volume (Chapter 3) proposes that the *Historia abbatum* was a strenuous effort to construct the

[42] For example, in Bede's commentary on the three woes of Revelation 9.12 one woe is said to be here already, and that is heresy: *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 13, lines 92–5.

[43] The preface to the prose *Vita Sancti Cuthberti* (ed. B. Colgrave, *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert*, 142–306) makes it clear that Bede was commissioned to rewrite the story of St Cuthbert's life by Bishop Eadfrith and the monks at Lindisfarne, and this offers further confirmation that Bede's scholarly reputation was now firmly established well beyond the immediate vicinity of his own monastery. See further: Thacker, 'Ideal of reform'; E. Knibbs, 'Exegetical hagiography: Bede's prose *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*', *Revue Bénédictine*, 114 (2004), 233–52.

story of Wearmouth-Jarrow's past in order to guarantee its future. Much of this exertion is concentrated in speeches by the founder, Benedict Biscop, and by Abbot Ceolfrith, whose traumatic resignation, departure for Rome and death in 716 was the immediate context for the composition of this book. What stands out from its pages is a sense of persistent anxiety that the conjoined houses might be separated, with all the risks of depredation, or even expropriation that such a division would entail. Bede weaves his argument from two strands: first, he cloaks some of the controversies and irregularities that attended the foundations to give the impression that the two monasteries were always one; at the same time, he uses the drawn-out death of Biscop as a platform on which to stage concerns about their future. These concerns were very likely real in Biscop's day, and were undoubtedly real in *c.* 716. Both the *Historia abbatum* and the anonymous *Vita Ceolfridi* commit their readers to a particular narrative of the double monastery's past; both texts signal that Ceolfrith's resignation was linked in some way to a political crisis within the kingdom that spelled clear and present danger for the monastery; there may in addition have been factional rifts within the community. Past and future anxieties coalesce here, but the warnings and admonitions of the past, articulated by Biscop, are prophetic injunctions for the future as well.

4. 725–731

De temporum ratione, Bede's thorough survey of computus, time and the calendar was completed and issued in 725. Like each of the component parts that made up the earlier trilogy on time, nature and the apocalypse, the tract was intended, first and foremost, to benefit Bede's students and colleagues at Wearmouth-Jarrow.[44] By now Wearmouth-Jarrow was firmly established as a leading centre of expertise on time reckoning and the monastery was accustomed to fielding enquiries in this field from distant Christian communities. The Picts had turned to Wearmouth-Jarrow for guidance about calculating the date of Easter in the period before 716;[45] and a letter of Bede's to a monk named Helmwald, which appears to have been written before *De temporum ratione* was complete, responds to a question about leap years that reached Bede despite the fact that 'such vast distances of land and sea' (*tot terrarum marisque spatiis*) separated the men from each other.[46] *De temporum ratione* consolidates into a single volume the insights

[44] The preface reveals that *De temporum ratione* was written to satisfy a local demand, and the text is dedicated to Abbot Hwætberht.

[45] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.21.

[46] *Epistula ad Helmuualdum* (ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123C, 629), lines 11–18.

derived from many years of time-focused research, scholarship and teaching by Bede personally, and by the wider Wearmouth-Jarrow community collectively. But it was also written at a time when Bede's reflections on the future were turning to the wider historical stage.

Calvin Kendall's essay 'Bede and Islam' (Chapter 4) identifies the period *c.* 725 as a watershed in Bede's perception of the Arabs, a key aspect of his vision for the future of Christendom as a whole. In the chronicle in Chapter 66 of *De temporum ratione*, Bede recorded wars between Christians and 'Saracens', and in the second part of his commentary on Genesis (composed around 720) he notes with alarm that these people, 'hateful and hostile to all' (*omnibus exosi et contrarii*), could now be found in Europe.[47] This represents a hardening of the perspective found in Bede's earliest writings, which register awareness of the Saracens, treat them with mild curiosity and identify them as idolaters descended from Ishmael.[48] Of course, Bede did not know anything about Islam itself, but Kendall shows that his writings mark an important stage in the transformation of the Arabs from just another group of frontier marauders into Christendom's religious arch-enemy (or to put it another way, in the western construction of Islam). The growing realisation that the Saracens held three-fourths of the known world must have been the cause of dismay for Bede. Indeed, Kendall argues that Bede's decision to end his commentary on Genesis with the exile of Hagar and Ishmael into the desert, and not proceed to God's promise that Ishmael would become 'a great nation', indicates that he was disturbed by the contemporary career of Ishmael's supposed descendants, and uncertain of what it meant. But by ending the commentary at this point, Bede had, wittingly or not, cast Ishmael as the essential adversary of the Church, not as one more nation ripe for conversion. By the time he penned the next-to-last chapter of the *Historia ecclesiastica* (5.23), the Saracens had become actors in an apocalyptic drama, announced by comets that seem ready to engulf the whole world.

De temporum ratione contains a distinct section on the future, which is examined in two subsequent contributions to this volume by Peter Darby and James Palmer (Chapters 5 and 6). Darby's essay shows that, much like his chronology of early English history, Bede's precise chronology of the end-times is an original construction that brings unknown time into view by critical synchronisation and careful assembly of fragmentary information from sources that Bede considered trustworthy. The events leading up to the Last Judgement

[47] *Libri quattuor in principium Genesis* (ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 118A), 4, lines 249–54.

[48] *Nomina regionum atque locorum de Actibus Apostolorum* (ed. M.L.W. Laistner, CCSL 121, 167–78), lines 20–22; *De locis sanctis* (ed. J. Fraipont, CCSL 175, 245–80), 17, lines 4–6; *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, 7, lines 93–103.

would unfold in the Sixth Age, that is, within time; they therefore could be arranged as a history with the same chronological precision as that of past time. This allowed Bede to engage seriously with the numerical time-cues of biblical prophecy, while continuing to stave off the heresy of calculating the starting date of the end. The closing drama of the Sixth Age would unfold in slightly over seven years but even this time-table has some indeterminate elements, for otherwise those alive at that time would be able to know in advance when the Judgement would take place.[49] Though he grounded his programme for the future in the Fathers, Bede went well beyond Augustine's nervous agnosticism, while avoiding the over-detailed and outdated speculations of Jerome. Here again, Bede makes an important methodological and theological equation between how we understand the past, and what we can know about the future: orthodox faith, but also the reckoning of time are the twin windows into and out of Edwin's bright hall.

Palmer demonstrates that Bede's history of the future had a future of its own in the Carolingian period, and one that was just as complex and indeterminate as any Bede himself could image. He draws our attention to the deeply polemical nature of *De temporum ratione*, which argues both for Dionysius's version of the Alexandrian computistical system against its rivals, and also for a chronological reform of *Annus Domini* that would definitively uncouple the world-ages from any casual equation with millennia, and thus disable their potential for apocalyptic speculation. Bede was, in short, waging a battle for the future on two fronts: the future date of Easter and the future of time. He personally saw these two issues as conjoined, but his Carolingian readers were less persuaded, for when they copied *De temporum ratione*, they not infrequently dropped the chronicle and 'history of the future' in Chapters 66–71. The chronicle could even be replaced by another chronicle based on the very Eusebian *Annus Mundi* reckoning Bede rejected. Carolingian scribes and scholars were sometimes interested in comparing Bede's views to those of his rivals, so presumably they did not consider the controversies closed. Above all, the 'history of the future' chapters in *De temporum ratione* seem to have had little impact on Carolingian debates, even though the tract itself was widely diffused and popular. Bede can be said to have won the battle for the future of Easter; the battle for the future of time, on the other hand, shifted to different theatres of war, sidelining his contribution. The outcome, in every case, lay in the hands of those who copied, edited and excerpted his works.

[49] *De temporum ratione*, 69.

In *De temporum ratione* Bede was, of course, going back over some of the ground covered in *De temporibus*, the shorter tract on time-reckoning issued more than twenty years before. The later work is far more comprehensive than the earlier, not only in terms of its coverage of the subject as a whole (*De temporibus* lacked a section on future time, for instance), but also in the depth of detail devoted to the sub-topics common to both works.[50] Bede was now willing to offer second thoughts on certain issues, and he set out to revise some of the interpretations originally advanced in his earlier writings. In compiling a commentary on a second synoptic Gospel, that of Mark, Bede reused substantial sections of the commentary on Luke, but in doing so he often took the opportunity to update some of his earlier interpretations where he had acquired new knowledge which supplanted or supplemented what he had written before.[51] The *Retractatio in Actuum Apostolorum*, a text devoted to updating and amending the *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, is usually assigned to this period of Bede's career.[52] Ever dedicated to learning, as well as to teaching and writing, one impulse behind Bede's reconsideration of Acts was his improved understanding of Greek.[53] The *Retractatio* offers further evidence that Bede's exegetical writings were issued into a critical landscape, as certain passages in it seem to have been inspired by criticism of parts of the *Expositio* by that text's contemporary readership.[54] Indeed, the very act of revision, be it the revision of *De temporibus* as *De temporum ratione* or the more modest *addenda et corrigenda* of Acts, expresses something important about Bede's attitude towards futurity: namely, that his writings were not definitive treasuries of past knowledge, but

[50] For example, compare the brief chapter on the week in Chapter 4 of *De temporibus* with the much longer treatment of the same subject in *De temporum ratione* 8.

[51] W.F. Bolton, *A history of Anglo-Latin literature, 597–1066, vol. 1* (Princeton, NJ, 1967), 117–19.

[52] Brown, *Companion to Bede*, 64, n. 147.

[53] *Retractatio in Actuum Apostolorum* (ed. M.L.W. Laistner, CCSL 121, 103–63), preface, lines 13–22; B. Ward, *The Venerable Bede* (London, 1990), 58–60. On Bede's knowledge of Greek see further: W.F. Bolton, 'An aspect of Bede's later knowledge of Greek', *The Classical Review*, 13 (1963), 17–18; A.C. Dionisotti, 'On Bede, grammars, and Greek', *Revue Bénédictine*, 92 (1982), 111–41; K.M. Lynch, 'The Venerable Bede's knowledge of Greek', *Traditio*, 39 (1983), 432–9; L.T. Martin, 'Bede as a linguistic scholar', *American Benedictine Review*, 35 (1985), 204–14.

[54] For example: *Retractatio in Actuum Apostolorum*, 1, lines 48–85 [on 1.13] (Bede corrects a mistake from the *Expositio* which he had inherited from Jerome's *In euangelium Matthaei*); and 13, lines 14–145 (Bede defends his previous comments about the year in which Paul was made apostle). See the comments of L.T. Martin, *The Venerable Bede: Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1989), 23–4 and 122–3.

living products that had to grow and be re-invented with new knowledge, and to meet new needs.

The period from 725 to 731 was not just a phase of reflection and correction; it was also a phase of activity shot through with creative vision, one that produced some of Bede's most masterful and distinctive scholarship. These years saw the issuing of novel and ambitious texts, such as *De templo* (a treatment of the account of the building and dedication of the Temple of Solomon relayed in 1 Kings 5.6–7.51), a commentary on the books of Ezra and Nehemiah which is much concerned with ecclesiastical reform and the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*.[55] The preface to the latter text reveals that Bede now sat at the heart of a very wide intellectual network; his reach and influence were such that he could access materials from the papal archive in Rome through his intermediary Nothhelm.[56] As well as Acca (the dedicatee of *In Marci euangelium expositio* and probably *De templo* as well), Bede was now writing for an audience that included King Ceolwulf of Northumbria (the addressee of the *Historia ecclesiastica*) and Albinus, abbot of the monastery of St Peter and St Paul at Canterbury (to whom Bede is known to have sent copies of the commentary on the Temple and *Historia ecclesiastica*).[57]

Although the *Historia ecclesiastica* is concerned with the past, the prologue to that text makes it abundantly clear that it was written to influence its readership in the present and future. Máirín Mac Carron's contribution to this volume (Chapter 7) demonstrates that this strategy is evident even in the method of dating employed as a means to provide the narrative with a chronological spine. Bede's use of *Annus Domini* dating in the *Historia ecclesiastica* is informed by theological concerns connected with the meaning of Easter itself. She reminds us that *Annus Domini* chronology is inextricably associated with Dionysius Exiguus's Paschal table; it distinguishes that table from those of its rivals (like

[55] The novel nature of *De templo* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A, 143–234) is acknowledged by Bede in its prologue, lines 55–6: 'Verum quia noua quaeque non numquam amplius delectant …'; see further: A. Holder, 'New treasures and old in Bede's *De tabernaculo* and *De templo*', *Revue Bénédictine*, 99 (1989), 237–49. For the innovative nature of Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A, 237–392) see: S. DeGregorio, 'Footsteps of his own: Bede's commentary on Ezra-Nehemiah', in *Innovation and tradition*, ed. DeGregorio, 143–68.

[56] On the materials supplied to Bede by Nothhelm: P. Meyvaert, 'The *Registrum* of Gregory the Great and Bede', *Revue Bénédictine*, 80 (1970), 162–6; J. Story, 'Bede, Willibrord and the letters of Pope Honorius I on the genesis of the archbishopric of York', *English Historical Review*, 127 (2012), 783–818.

[57] A letter of Bede's to Abbot Albinus accompanied copies of *De templo* and the *Historia ecclesiastica* sent from Wearmouth-Jarrow to Canterbury in *c.* 731. See further: J.A. Westgard, 'New manuscripts of Bede's letter to Albinus', *Revue Bénédictine*, 120 (2010), 208–15.

the table of Victorius, which dated by *Annus Passionis*) every bit as much as did its computistical principles. The focus of both tables was Easter, the celebration of the Passion and Resurrection of Christ, but Dionysius's system yoked redemption with the Incarnation. This triangulation of Incarnation-Passion-Easter resonated with Christological controversies in Bede's milieu; to choose Dionysius, therefore, was to make a theological statement about the role of Christ's humanity in the redemption. In the *Historia ecclesiastica* there is a steady crescendo of AD dates from Book 1 forwards, with the notable exception of Book 3, where they drop off sharply. This cannot be ascribed to lack of information, because Bede actually supplies the AD dates in the chronological synopsis at the close of the work. What makes Book 3 different is its focus on the period of Northumbrian history when the influence of Iona dominated. Unlike Columba, the kings and bishops of this era knew of the 'correct' form of Paschal reckoning, but chose to be loyal to the 84-year cycle. Bede's omission of AD dates when referring to these people contrasts with his lavish deployment of AD dates for the activities of Ecgberht of Iona, the man who would eventually persuade the monastery to conform.[58] Because Easter stood for Christian unity through faith in the Incarnate Redeemer, Bede used AD to shape his readers' understanding of the drama of the unification of the Christian Church in Britain. But it also has an eschatological dimension: Ecgberht's death on Easter Sunday is folded into a vision of eternity as a never-ending Easter, a vision which had previously been articulated with particular force in the closing chapter of *De temporum ratione*.[59]

As he completed the *Historia ecclesiastica*, Bede looked anxiously to a future which he would no longer be a part of, and he ends his text (5.23) with an ambiguous statement about the time to come which is examined in Paul Hilliard's essay in Chapter 8 of this volume. Bede says that at the time of writing, peace and prosperity reign; there is universal orthodoxy and loyalty to the Roman Church; and Northumbrians are laying down weapons of war to take up monastic vows. Yet a note of disquiet is sounded: 'What the result will be, a later generation will discover' (*quae res quem sit habitura finem, posterior aetas videbit*). Hilliard argues that this ominous comment is not an abrupt intrusion into the sunny assessment of the state of the English, but rather the shadow cast by peace and prosperity itself. In the *Historia ecclesiastica* there are eloquent examples of how confidence in *pax et securitas* could presage catastrophe, but also of how adversity could stimulate repentance. In his exegetical works as well, Bede repeatedly shows that desire for wealth, power, esteem and security in this

[58] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.22.

[59] *De temporum ratione*, 71.

world was a dangerous temptation for Christians, individually and collectively. When it came to the temporal order, Christians were to expect adversity, the 'default setting' of the Church's life; adversity is not only certain, it is good, for it unmasks the deceptive nature of prosperity, corrects the desires of the faithful and displays God's faithful care. Moreover, God will raise up champions in the future, as he called them forth in the past, to defend the Church against her enemies in the time of trouble. That Bede often characterised these heroes as 'doctors' and 'teachers', roles he often implicitly ascribed to himself, is surely significant.[60]

5. 731–735

On 5 November 734, just a few months before his death in the following year, Bede wrote a letter to Ecgberht, bishop (later archbishop) of York; this is the last of Bede's extant writings to which we can assign a fixed date of composition. The letter spells out Bede's hopes and fears for the future of the Church in Northumbria in the plainest possible terms. The final chapter of this volume, Scott DeGregorio's 'Visions of Reform: Bede's Later Writings in Context', astutely observes that had the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* not survived our view of Bede and his milieu would be very different. Bede aims to incite, even to command Ecgberht to reform the Church before it is too late. Ecgberht will have to answer at the Last Judgement if he does not act, but behind the personal warning looms a picture of a dissolute and worldly English episcopacy. The problems are the large sizes of dioceses, the paucity of trained clergy and the custom of collecting monetary dues in return for pastoral services. Bede proposed concrete solutions: delegation of episcopal duties, vernacular translations of sacred texts to help train priests and catechise the people, the establishment of an archbishopric at York in accordance with Pope Gregory's original plan and, most controversially, the expropriation of the wealth of fraudulent tax-shelter monasteries. Ecgberht and his kinsman King Ceolwulf must purge the land of these offences, following the example of the righteous rulers of ancient Israel. Otherwise what the Old Testament prophets predicted for the Jews would be fulfilled for the English: they would suffer the punishment for avarice and the land would be defenceless against 'barbarian incursions'. The *Epistula ad Ecgbertum* reminds us that Bede was interested in various different futures, and that his perspectives on those futures overlapped with and fed into each other.

[60] Thacker, 'Bede and the ordering of understanding', 43–6.

Conclusions

The essays collected here demonstrate concerns about the time to come that recur in a variety of contexts from Bede's earliest major exegetical commentary to his very last letter. Genre also plays a role: Bede seemed to think about the apocalyptic future when he was preoccupied with *computus* (as he was in 703 and 725), about the future of Wearmouth-Jarrow when writing institutional history, and about the potential future crisis of the Church in Northumbria when he was working on Old Testament exegesis. Did the impulse to think about a certain kind of future, and in a particular way, emerge unbidden from the character of his subject matter? Or did Bede choose his subject matter to express his concerns about the future? Such questions should stimulate future research. And there are more: did Bede intend to connect anxiety about the state of the Church in Northumbria with dread of the Saracens and a sense of impending Judgement? Is there any connection between the increasing precision of Bede's picture of the end times and the sharpening of his views on Islam? Or did his many futures remain embedded in their particular historical landscapes? In examining some of Bede's major writings, along with some others that are less frequently given significant attention in modern scholarship, it is hoped that the volume will encourage Bede's twenty-first-century audience to think of him not only as an indispensable authority on the past, but as a writer who – from *Expositio Apocalypseos* to the *Epistula ad Ecgbertum* – had plenty to say about the future as well.

This page has been left blank intentionally

Chapter 1

Why did Bede Write a Commentary on Revelation?

Faith Wallis

From the outset of his career as an author, Bede set himself up as an expert on the future – not, indeed, on future events, but on orthodox thinking concerning the future. The essays in this volume trace this claim in its diverse forms across Bede's literary output, but it was initially articulated in Bede's first work of biblical exegesis, the *Expositio Apocalypseos*. In the light of the aims of *Bede and the Future* it thus seems particularly pertinent to ask why Bede decided to comment on Revelation at all, and why he did so at a particular point in time. Bede's commentaries are valuable keys to his thinking on a wide range of topics relating to theology, spirituality, church discipline, secular and ecclesiastical authority, and Christian life and learning, but comparatively little sustained attention has been paid to Bede's choice of particular books of the Bible for commentary, or the timing of these choices. The fact that he *was* selective tends to get lost in generalisations about Bede's unwavering lifelong mission to distil existing patristic commentaries, and to fill the remaining gaps in the exegetical library with expositions of Scripture suitable for the newly converted English. This gives the impression that the timing of Bede's commentaries was driven by commissions from others, such as Bishop Acca, or failing that, by Bede's inner fascinations and preferences.[1] But such explanations are not entirely persuasive. To begin with, Bede did not tackle every book of the Bible expounded by the Fathers: his total neglect of the Prophets, apart from the lost *capitula lectionum*

[1] See for example, G.H. Brown, *A companion to Bede* (Woodbridge, 2009), 34; B. Ward, *The Venerable Bede* (London, 1990), 66. Increasingly, the shape of Bede's work as an exegete – what he commented on, when (including the interruptions in his writing process) and how (e.g. what was included or omitted) – is seen as driven by his evolving ecclesial and broadly political concerns. Notable examples are S. DeGregorio, 'Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam* and the reform of the Northumbrian Church', *Speculum*, 79 (2004), 1–25; 'Footsteps of his own: Bede's commentary on Ezra-Nehemiah', in *Innovation and tradition in the writings of the Venerable Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Morgantown WV, 2006), 11–35; and 'Bede and the Old Testament', in *The Cambridge companion to Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Cambridge, 2010), 127–41. Also: C. Kendall, *Bede: On Genesis* (Liverpool, 2008), 45–53.

mentioned in *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.24, and of the Psalms, is particularly striking. There are similar weaknesses in the gap-filling hypothesis. Bede chose to fill some gaps with exceptional density: the commentaries on the Tabernacle and the Temple, which expand a few chapters of the Old Testament into full-scale treatises, are cases in point. On the other hand, he did not think good to fill other gaps underserved by the works of the fathers, such as Joshua, Judges and Ruth, or Lamentations.

The question becomes more complex when we turn to Bede's *Expositio Apocalypseos*. To be sure, none of the major fathers had produced a systematic exegesis of Revelation, but even if Bede wanted to fill a gap, this particular book is an unusual choice for a novice. Revelation was regarded from the patristic era as a notoriously challenging and even dangerous book; it won a berth in the canon of Scripture only with difficulty,[2] and two of the principal exponents of its Latin commentary tradition were linked to heresy. Indeed, one of the first sustained discussions of Revelation took place in the context of heresy: Irenaeus of Lyons' (d. *c.* 202) *Adversus haereses.* The heresy in question was Gnosticism, and Irenaeus came perilously close to linking belief in a literal and earthly thousand-year reign of the saints of Revelation 20.4 to his defence of the resurrection of the flesh against the Gnostics. Moreover, Irenaeus leapt from the millenarian frying-pan into the apocalyptic fire by embracing the notion that world-history was divided into six ages. These ages, like the six days of creation which were their antitype, were fixed time-periods of exactly one thousand years each. Hence the world would end in *Annus Mundi* 6000 (*Adversus haereses*, 5.28.3), despite Christ's warnings that the end could not be foreseen and would come without warning.[3] Victorinus, bishop of Pettau (d. 304), was martyred for the faith, but his exposition of Revelation – the oldest biblical commentary in Latin – had to be re-written by Jerome to efface its embarrassing millenarian teaching.[4] Yet while there was general consensus that the millennium of Revelation 20.4 should not be taken literally, the Fathers were less consistent on the question of the world-ages. The symbolic parallel between

[2] B. McGinn, 'Introduction: John's Apocalypse and the apocalyptic mentality', in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, eds R.K. Emmerson and B. McGinn (Ithaca, 1992), 3–19, at 17–19; B.E. Daley, 'Apocalypticism in Early Christian Theology', in *The Continuum history of apocalypticism*, eds B. McGinn, J.J. Collins and S.J. Stein (New York, NY, and London, 2003), 221–53.

[3] Daley, 'Apocalypticism', 225–6. On the world-week (a concept linked to but not identical with the notion of the six ages of the world), see A. Luneau, *L'Histoire du salut chez les Pères de l'Église: la doctrine des* âges *du monde* (Paris, 1964), 81–5, 209–17; J. Daniélou, 'La typologie millénariste de la semaine dans le christianisme primitif', *Vigiliae christianae*, 2 (1948), 1–16.

[4] M. Dulaey, 'Jérôme, Victorin de Poetovio et le millénarisme', in *Jérôme entre l'Occident et l'Orient*, ed. Y-M. Duval (Paris, 1988), 83–98.

the narrative of creation and the course of world history was attractive; moreover, Jerome's own adaptation of Eusebius of Caesarea's universal chronicle placed the birth of Christ at *Annus Mundi* 5199, close enough to the inception of the sixth millennium to suggest that fixed thousand-year world-ages were endorsed by historical chronology. Neither millenarianism nor a fixed date for the end tainted the commentary of Tyconius (fl. *c.* 370–390), even if his adhesion to the Donatist heresy did. Though Primasius (d. *c.* 558) and Caesarius of Arles (d. 572) exploited Tyconius's work, Primasius in particular saw fit to express disdain for its author.[5] All this must have marked the Book of Revelation as an exegetical minefield. Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose and Gregory all passed Revelation by; though Augustine dealt with some of its final chapters in *De civitate Dei*. Gregory, an authority especially dear to Bede, had a keen sense of the approaching end of time, but contemplated it mainly through the imagery of the Synoptic Gospels, not the Revelation of John.[6]

Filling a gap hardly seems to suffice as a motive for such an ambitious and even perilous undertaking, particularly for a beginner. For Bede undoubtedly composed his commentary on Revelation at the very outset of his literary career, at around the same time as he wrote his earliest dated work, *De temporibus* (703) and its companion piece, *De natura rerum*.[7] That Bede displayed considerable boldness has been occluded by a common perception that the commentary is derivative, and hence timid. The commentary is indeed largely a mosaic of quotations from Bede's sources, and it is presented as a series of short exegetical

---

[5] In the prologue to his *Commentarius in Apocalypsin* (ed. A.W. Adams, CCSL 92), Primasius describes reading Tyconius as 'plucking gems from dung' (lines 18–22).

[6] R.A. Markus, 'Living within sight of the end', in *Time in the medieval world*, eds C. Humphrey and W.M. Ormrod (Woodbridge, 2001), 23–34 and *Gregory the Great and his world* (Cambridge, 1997), 51–67; R. Manselli, 'L'escatologia di Gregorio Magni', *Ricerche di storia religiosa*, 1 (1954), 72–88; C. Dagens, 'La fin des temps et l'Église selon Saint Grégoire le Grand', *Recherches de science religieuse*, 58 (1970), 273–88. For a discussion of the impact of Gregory's eschatological ideas on Bede, see P. Darby, *Bede and the end of time* (Farnham, 2012), 147–63, as well as R.A. Markus, 'Gregory and Bede: the making of the western apocalyptic tradition', *Gregorio Magno nel XIV centenario della morte*, Atti dei convegni Lincei 209 (Rome, 2004), 247–64; and T.W. Mackay, 'Augustine and Gregory the Great in Bede's *Commentary on the Apocalypse*', in *Northumbria's golden age*, eds J. Hawkes and S. Mills (Stroud, 1999), 396–405.

[7] A date of approximately 703 is conventionally assigned to the commentary, e.g. by Brown, *Companion to Bede*, 69; others, like Arthur Holder prefer a more cautious *c.* 703–709: A. Holder, 'Bede and the New Testament', in *The Cambridge companion to Bede*, ed. DeGregorio, 142–55, at 144. Internal and external evidence in support of *c.* 703 is discussed below, and is supported by the argument of P.N. Darby, 'Bede's time shift of 703 in context', in *Abendländische Apokalyptik. Kompendium zur Genealogie der Endzeit*, eds V. Wieser, C. Zolles, C. Feik, M. Zolles and L. Schlöndorff (Berlin, 2013), 619–40.

'bites' expounding the text clause by clause; but both exegesis by excerpting and the *commaticum* type of abbreviated commentary were sophisticated and even 'cutting edge' techniques in Bede's day. They need not in themselves denote caution.[8] In the light of this fact, some recent work has advanced the *terminus a quo* of the composition of the commentary to 710 or beyond.[9] This date rests on the one secure point of chronological reference for dating the commentary on Revelation: it is mentioned in the prefatory dedicatory epistle of Bede's commentary on Acts, and this epistle addresses bishop Acca of Hexham, who succeeded Wilfrid in 710. To be sure, this is only the earliest possible date for that letter; the latest conceivable date would be 716, when Hwætberht (also known as Eusebius), who is named in the Acts dedication as 'brother', became abbot of Wearmouth-Jarrow after the departure of Ceolfrith. It is to Hwætberht that Bede dedicates the Revelation commentary. But there is internal evidence that the Acts commentary was composed very shortly after Acca's consecration, which I shall present below. This evidence would date the Revelation commentary to before 709, and in my view, well before. An attentive reading of the Acts dedication also reveals something of what Bede thought of his Revelation commentary; indeed, it helps to explain why Bede commented on Revelation in the first place.

The Dedicatory Letter to the Commentary on Acts and the '*Obstrepentes Causae*'

The dedicatory epistle opens by pointedly reminding Acca that he had effectively commissioned Bede as an exegete on the basis of the Revelation commentary. Acca's 'very numerous letters' exhorting Bede to 'pursue daily meditation on and investigation of the scriptures' were (at least by implication) sent to acknowledge receipt of the *Expositio Apocalypseos*. This work, Bede says, had been 'transcribed

[8] Derivative character of the *Commentary*: M.L.W. Laistner, 'The library of the Venerable Bede', in *Bede, his life, times, and writings*, ed. A.H. Thompson (Oxford, 1935), 237–66, at 252; S. DeGregorio, 'The Venerable Bede and Gregory the Great: exegetical connections, spiritual departures', *Early Medieval Europe*, 18 (2010), 52; A.T. Thacker, 'Bede and the ordering of understanding', in *Innovation and tradition*, ed. DeGregorio, 37–63, at 46; A. Holder, 'Bede and the New Testament', 145. G. Lobrichon, 'Stalking the signs: the apocalyptic commentaries', in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: religious expectation and social change, 950–1050*, eds R. Landes, A.C. Gow and D.C. Van Meter (New York, NY, 2003), 67–79, argues that the commentary's clarity compensates for its derivative character.

[9] R. Gryson, 'Les commentaires patristiques latins de l'Apocalypse [part 2]', *Revue théologique de Louvain*, 28 (1997), 484–502, at 484; and Ward, *Venerable Bede*, 51, 58.

directly' for Acca at the request of Hwætberht. Bede had since been engaged in commenting on the gospel of Luke, but had not in fact completed this task. He offered two excuses: he was 'overawed (*perterritus*) by the task', but also 'hindered (*praepeditus*) by *obstrepentes causae* of which you are very much aware'. *Obstrepens* denotes hostile clamour or aggressive shouting, so whatever the *causae* (which I would interpret as 'circumstances', with a strongly causative connotation) were, they were complicated – hence the plural – and more than a distracting annoyance. Bede's decision to send Acca the Acts commentary in its stead was made in haste; the exemplar forwarded to Acca 'was produced not many days ago' and 'put out as quickly as time permitted in the form of little parchments (*membranulis*)'. Along with the Acts commentary, Bede sent a 'very short explanation' of one of the epistles of John, which he specified was composed of extracts from Augustine, though he 'added some things at the end'.[10]

Bede's letter fairly crackles with tension, even anxiety. First, he is emphatic that Acca approved the Revelation commentary, and claims that the Luke commentary was a commission from Acca – a prestigious accolade for a relatively junior scholar. But rather suddenly, Bede felt obliged to solicit the benevolent attention of Acca by apologising for the delay in the Luke commentary, and sending copies of two new works: a commentary on Acts and one on an epistle of John – the latter probably the exposition on 1 John later incorporated into Bede's omnibus commentary on the seven Catholic Epistles. Moreover, he put this package together in a rush, and hints somewhat cryptically that he was responding to a summons from Acca. Bede's excuses also seem allusive. Anyone who had tackled Revelation would surely feel relatively confident

[10] *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum* (ed. M.L.W. Laistner, CCSL 121, 3–99), preface, lines 3–18 and 76–80: 'Accepi creberrimas beatitudinis tuae litteras quibus me commonere dignatus es ne mentis acumen inerti otio torpere et obdormire permittam, sed meditandis scrutandisque cotidie scripturis vigil atque indefessus insistam, et, post expositionem apocalypseos sancti evangelistae Iohannis quam fratris nostri Eusebii rogatu tribus libris complexam mox tibi transscribendam destinavi, in explanationem quoque beati evangelistae Lucae iuxta vestigia patrum quantum valeam sudoris expendam. Quod quia facere necdum potui et operis videlicet immensitate perterritus et obstrepentium causarum, quas tu melius nosti necessitate praepeditus, ne tamen tuae postulationis contemneretur auctoritas, quod interim potui feci. Misi enim opusculum in actus apostolorum, quod ante non multos dies editum et velocissime quantum tempus dederat, ne tua sacrosancta voluntas impediretur, emendandum membranulis indideram, ubi ea quae vel mystice gesta vel obscurius dicta videbantur, ut potui, dilucidare temptavi ... Misi autem et explanatiunculam epistolae beatissimi evangelistae Iohannis, cuius maximum partem ex omeliis sancti Augustini latissima suavitate diffusis compendiosus breviator excerpsi. Nonnulla vero in calce etiam proprio sudore subtexui ...'. The English translation is by L.T. Martin, *The Venerable Bede: Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1989), 3–6, slightly modified.

about addressing Luke's Gospel, where the loam of patristic exegesis was much richer; Bede's claim to be *perterritus* seems exaggerated for a modesty topos, and suggests genuine nervousness. The second excuse reinforces this impression: Bede could not make headway on Luke because he was tied up (*praepeditus*) by some *obstrepentes causae*, and he did not have to remind Acca what these circumstances were. Why was Bede rushing so precipitously to shore up his reputation with Acca? Does the implication that Acca was fully aware of the *causae* suggest that Bede needed the bishop's favour, or was even in danger of forfeiting it?

There is only one documented event in Bede's career that could qualify as 'tumultuously hostile circumstances': the charge of heresy levelled against him by members of the entourage of Acca's predecessor, Wilfrid. Insofar as this episode can be reconstructed on the basis of Bede's own testimony, it would seem that in 708, some of Wilfrid's clergy, in Wilfrid's presence, accused Bede of teaching that the Lord's Incarnation occurred prior to the sixth age of the world. Wilfrid himself did not intervene. But one of their number, a cleric named Plegwine, reacted swiftly and sent an oral message to Bede, who in a mere two days composed a spirited response in the form of a letter to his informant. The speed at which these events unfolded, and the fact that Bede asks Plegwine to convey the letter to a certain 'David', that it might be read to Wilfrid, bespeaks the urgency of the situation. Bede says that the accusation was 'babbled out by lewd rustics in their cups' (*a lasciuientibus rusticis ... per pocula decantari*), but this may be more of a slap at the credibility of his enemies than a description of the actual circumstances. It was clearly not something that anyone was treating as a joke. Bede had friends in Wilfrid's circle: Plegwine himself and 'our religious and very learned brother David' (*religioso ac doctissimo fratri nostro Dauid*).[11] David is also asked, *via* Plegwine, 'to follow the example of the boy whose namesake he is, and to exert himself sedulously to expel the madness of spirit from the unreasonable brother by the exhortation of healthful words, as if by the sweet modulation of psalmody'.[12] It is possible that David was, in fact, Acca, for Bede identifies Acca as both a musician and a theologian in *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.20. Over the course of his career, Bede also directed two works towards Acca that specifically concerned King David and

[11] *Epistola ad Pleguinam* (ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123C, 617–26), 1, lines 3–7 and 17, lines 309–10.

[12] *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 17, lines 315–18: 'Ipsum quoque dauid prae caeteris rogo ut, iuxta exemplum sibi cognominis pueri, furorem spiritus nequam a fratre disipiente hortatu sanorum uerborum quasi dulci psalmodiae modulatione sedulus effugare contendat'. Translation: F. Wallis, *Bede: The reckoning of time*, revised 2nd edition (Liverpool, 2004), 415.

his dynasty – the commentary on the first part of Samuel and *De templo*[13] – and Bede's collection of hymns (his own psalms, so to speak) may have been conceived with Hexham in mind.[14] He also composed epigrams for churches at Hexham, apparently for ceremonies of dedication.[15] Bede envisages 'David' exorcising the madness of his accuser, but any medieval reader of the letter to Plegwine would have known that the biblical David soothed the rage of his lord, King Saul. The real target of Bede's campaign of self-defence was undoubtedly Wilfrid and Acca, as his loyal right-hand man – 'Wilfrid's priest' according to *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.20 – would have been best positioned to advocate for him. And even if Acca were not 'David', he would surely, by virtue of his close association with Wilfrid, have been aware of the charges levelled against Bede.

The letter to Plegwine relates that Bede at first was baffled that anyone could accuse him of not believing that Christ's Incarnation occurred in, and indeed inaugurated, the Sixth Age:

> At length I called to mind that I once showed to one of your number my short work *On Times* which I wrote five years ago. In this work, the sequence of the years was given according to the Hebrew Truth; this is far shorter than the Septuagint, so that up to the Advent of the Saviour in the flesh, five thousand years were not completed. And I believe that I advised, in consideration of fraternal charity and truth itself, that credence be given to Holy Scripture as it is translated by our Christian interpreter, rather than to Jewish translators, or the ignorance of chronographers, pointing out how Eusebius in his designation of times followed neither Hebrew Truth nor the version of the Seventy in every [instance].[16]

---

[13] *De templo* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A, 143–234) is addressed to his 'most beloved of bishops' (*dilectissime antistitum*; prologue, line 49), and while Acca is not explicitly named, it is virtually certain that this is he: Darby, *Bede and the end of time*, 83–91. Similar language is used in explicitly saluting Acca in the prologue to the commentary on 1 Samuel as '*dilectissime ac desideratissime omnium qui in terris morantur antistitum Acca*': *In primam partem Samuhelis* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119, 5–287), prologue, lines 35–6. The comparisons Bede draws between David and Christ in this same prologue may contain an allusion to Acca as 'David'. For while David and Jesus share some literal connections (both were born in Bethlehem, both suffered tribulations), it is the symbolic ones that Bede emphasises at lines 47–52: both were *pastores* and both were anointed, David literally and Christ mystically. Bishop Acca was also an anointed *pastor*.

[14] Darby, *Bede and the end of time*, 89–91.

[15] M. Lapidge, 'Some remnants of Bede's lost *Liber epigrammatum*', *English Historical Review*, 90 (1975), 798–820.

[16] *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 3, lines 31–42: 'Tandemque uenit in memoriam quia cuidam uestrum nuper opusculum meum de temporibus quod ante quinquennium edidi monstrabam. In quo annorum series iuxta hebraicam veritatem, ubi lxx interpretatibus longe breuior habetur, erat annotata, ita ut usque ad aduentum saluatoris in carne nec quinque annorum sint millia

The unnamed individual to whom Bede showed *De temporibus* shortly after its completion in 703 evidently circulated it amongst Wilfrid's entourage. *De temporibus* was an innovative manual of *computus*, the body of scientific and religious knowledge and technique required to manage Christian time-reckoning in accordance with the parameters of the Alexandrian system of Easter computation used in Rome. Bede perhaps anticipated that Wilfrid, champion of Roman calendar customs at the 'synod' of Whitby, would appreciate this book; maybe he even intended to solicit Wilfrid's patronage.

De temporibus is structured as a hemerology, or analysis of units of time from the smallest to the largest, the world-age. The world-ages, however, are not like the other divisions of time, because they are not units of reckoning of uniform duration, like days or years. Thus Bede compares them, not to the six days of creation, but to the six ages of the human life-span (*De temporibus*, 16), and stresses that each age of the life cycle covers a different number of years. The final age, the sixth, is like old age, in that we know when its begins – the Incarnation – but cannot tell when it will end: 'The sixth age, which is unfolding now, has no established sequence of generations or times, but like extreme dotage itself, will end in the death of the whole *saeculum*'.[17] Moreover, the length of the first two ages (Adam to Noah, Noah to Abraham), which are calculated on the basis of the life-spans of the patriarchs recorded in Genesis, differ between the Hebrew and Septuagint texts (*De temporibus*, 17–18). Bede favoured the 'Hebrew Truth' (*hebraica veritas*), whose numbers were drastically lower than those in the Septuagint. In consequence, Christ's birth was pegged at *Annus Mundi* 3952; Bede explicitly contrasts this revised date to Jerome's and Isidore's 5199 (*De temporibus*, 22).

Given that Bede expressly begins the sixth age with the Incarnation in *De temporibus*, it is difficult to understand how he could be accused of holding the opinion that Christ's Incarnation did *not* take place in the sixth age. The problem lay instead in an analogy which Bede avoided in *De temporibus*: the analogy of

completa. Suadebamque illi fraternae, fateor, caritatis et ipsius ueritatis intuitu ut scripturae sacrae post christianum nobis interpretem translatae potius quam iudaicis interpretationibus uel chronographorum imperitiae fidem accomodare disceret, digito ostendens quia Eusebius in descriptione temporum neque hebraicam veritatem neque lxx translatorum per omnia sit editionem secutus'. Translation: Wallis, *Reckoning of Time*, 406.

[17] *De temporibus* (ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123C, 585–611), 16, lines 20–22: 'Sexta, quae nunc agitur, nulla generationum uel temporum serie certa sed, ut aetas decrepita ipsa, totius saeculi morte finienda'. Translation: C. Kendall and F. Wallis, *Bede: On the nature of things and On times* (Liverpool, 2010), 117–18. On the history of this analogy, see P. Archambault, 'The ages of man and the ages of the world: a study of two traditions', *Revue des Études Augustiniennes*, 12 (1966), 193–228, esp. 206–7.

the six days of creation and the six ages of the world. To compare an age to a day invited the assumption that ages are uniform units of time like days. Moreover, some biblical passages suggest that a day was equivalent to a thousand years, notably 2 Peter 3.8: 'one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day'.[18] The letter to Plegwine is a vigorous refutation of this notion, specifically on the grounds that it is heretical. For if one knows how many years have passed since the beginning of the sixth age, one can calculate exactly when the world will end, something Christ expressly declared impossible (Matthew 24.36; Mark 13.32; Acts 1.6–7).

The counter-argument presented to Plegwine is two-pronged: first, Bede defends the authority of the *hebraica veritas* with arguments drawn largely from Augustine; secondly, he attacks the heresy of calculation. Interestingly, both arguments are mirrored in the commentary on Acts and the exposition of the first epistle of John that Bede forwarded in such haste to Acca. In the preface to the Acts commentary, Bede voices surprise that Luke, an inspired writer, should record a patriarchal genealogy of Christ based on the Septuagint rather than the Hebrew text. He falls back on a statement by Jerome that Luke was better acquainted with the Greek than the Hebrew version of the Scriptures:

> Hence in order to explain some things, according to the measure of our insignificance, we have taken care to call to mind at the beginning the fact that *the evangelist Luke* himself, as has been said, *was according to the tradition of the church very well acquainted with tracts on the art of medicine, and more knowledgeable in Greek letters than in Hebrew. Hence his discourse, both in his gospel and in the Acts of the Apostles, is rather ornate and imbued with secular eloquence, and it employs more Greek witnesses than Hebrew* [Jerome, *In Isaiam* 3.10]. It happens accordingly that I am very much amazed, and, struck with overpowering astonishment because of the slowness of my understanding, do not know how to search for an explanation of why, when in the original Hebrew there are found ten generations from the flood down to Abraham, Luke himself (who, being controlled like a pen by the Holy Spirit, could by no means write anything false) chose to put down in his gospel eleven generations, having added Cainan in accordance with the Septuagint.[19]

---

[18] *Cf.* Psalm 89.4 (Vulgate 90.4). On the week-day analogy, see R. Schmidt, '"Aetates mundi". die Weltalter als Gliederungsprinzip der Geschichte', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 67 (1955–56), 288–317; and Luneau, *L'Histoire du salut*, 37–44 and chapters 1.1, 8 and 9.

[19] *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, preface, lines 1–12: 'E quibus nos aliqua iuxta modulum nostrae parvitatis exposituri primo admonere curavimus ipsum *evangelistam Lucam*, ut dictum est, *iuxta traditionem veterum ecclesiae tractatorum medicinae artis fuisse peritissimum et magis*

This seems an odd – and oddly prominent – digression, for the chronology in Luke's Gospel has no bearing on Acts. Did Bede have reason to think that Acca himself, the man who commissioned Bede to comment on Luke's Gospel, was aware of this anomaly? Might Acca's own confidence in Bede's chronology be wavering? Many years later, Acca would query another of Bede's eschatological observations, namely that the punishment of the devil and the damned will be eternal and irreversible; Bede's response survives as *De eo quod ait Isaias*. As Peter Darby observes, the fact that Acca exhibited some confusion over this issue shows that the educated clerical elite of Anglo-Saxon England was by no means in accord about the last things, or immune to error.[20]

Bede's second argument to Plegwine, against predicting the time of the end based on uniform world ages, targets *inter alia* a certain interpretation of 1 John 2.18: 'Little children, it is the final hour'. Bede says that in his youth he read a book by a 'heresiarch chronographer' who argued that John's epistle should be interpreted in the light of Christ's parable of the labourers in the vineyard. The labourers' day was divided into twelve hours; if the 6,000 years of world history are divided in the same way, each 'hour' would last 500 years. The chronographer argued that the 'final hour' therefore began 5,500 years after creation, at the Incarnation, and since he was writing 200 years into this 'final hour', only 300 remained until the Day of Judgement. Bede rejects this by citing Augustine: if the duration of the world were foreknown by everyone from the length and number of its ages, Christ's warnings that the end will come unexpectedly make no sense.[21]

Bede renews this attack on the misguided interpretation of 1 John 2.18 in his commentary on the Catholic Epistles. If this was substantially the same commentary that Bede forwarded to Acca, it would reinforce the impression that Bede was concerned about his reputation with the new bishop, and that the episode documented in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* was not yet resolved. The argument therefore bore repeating. When commenting on 1 John, however, Bede adopted a different strategy from the one he employed in the letter to

---

Graecas litteras scisse quam Hebraeas; unde sermo eius tam in evangelio quam in actibus apostolorum comptior est et saecularem redolet eloquentiam magisque testimoniis Graecis utitur quam Hebraeis. Ex quo accidit quod maxime miror et propter ingenii tarditatem vehementissimo stupore perculsus nescio perscrutari qua ratione, cum in Hebraica veritate a diluvio usque ad Abraham decem generationes inveniantur, ipse Lucas, qui Spiritu Sancto calamum regente nullatenus falsum scribere potuit, iuxta septuaginta interpretes adiecto Cainan in evangelio ponere maluit'. Translation: Martin, *Acts of the Apostles*, 4.

[20] Darby, *Bede and the end of time*, 141.

[21] *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 14, lines 238–60.

Plegwine; this approach mirrors, in fact, the exegetical stance of his commentary on Revelation.

The 'eleventh hour', Bede argues, refers to the entire sixth age, including the time of the apostle John himself, who experienced 'antichrists' and persecutions in his own day:

> **Little children, it is the last hour.** He calls the last age of the world which is now in progress the last hour, according to that parable of the Lord in which he tells of the workers having been hired at the first, third, sixth, ninth, and eleventh hours. For those who served the will of their Creator either by teaching or living properly from the beginning of the world cultivated the vineyard of the Lord from the first hour; those who lived from the time of Noah did so from the third hour; those who lived from the time of Abraham did so from the sixth hour; those who lived from the time of the giving of the law did so from the ninth hour; those who obey the heavenly commands from the time of the Lord's Incarnation to the end of the world do so from the eleventh hour. In this [eleventh] hour, namely, it was foretold by the prediction of the prophets that there would be both the coming of the saviour in the flesh and that there would follow the plague of antichrist, which would assail the heralds of salvation. Hence there follows: **And you have heard that the antichrist is coming, now many antichrists have appeared.** He is calling the heretics antichrists. But those who by their wrongful actions destroy the faith of Christ which they profess are also justifiably called antichrists, that is, opposed to Christ. All these give witness to that greatest antichrist who will come at the end of the world as to their head. Hence Paul says of him that *the mystery of iniquity is already at work* [2 Thessalonians 2.7]. **From this we know that it is the last hour.** From what? From the fact that many antichrists have appeared. What he says about it being even then the last hour can also be understood thus, however, that the persecution which was being waged at that time by the heretics had great similarity to that final persecution which is to come just before the day of judgment, although the former smote the Church only with savage tongues, the latter will also smite it with injurious swords.[22]

[22] *In epistulas septem catholicas* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 121, 181–342), *In epistolam I Iohannis*, 2, lines 214–38: '**Filioli, nouissima hora est.** Nouissimam horam nouissimum saeculi tempus quod nunc agitur dicit iuxta illam domini parabolam ubi operarios in uineam a prima hora, a tertia, a sexta, a nona, et ab undecima, narrat se conductos. A prima namque hora uineam domini excolebant qui a primordio saeculi uel docendo uel recte uiudendo sui creatoris uoluntati seruiebant, ab hora tertia qui a temporibus Noe, ab hora sexta qui a temporibus Abraham, ab hora nona qui a temporibus legis datae, ab hora undecima qui a temporibus dominicae incarnationis usque ad finem saeculi caelestibus famulantur imperiis, in qua uidelicet hora et aduentus in carne

Bede's approach to the text of Revelation follows exactly this line of reasoning. Revelation is about the entire history of the Church, beginning at the Incarnation.[23] Everything that is prophesied in Revelation has in a sense already come to pass, and will recur for the indefinite future; at the same time, the prophecies will be fulfilled in a uniquely intense and final way at the end of time. Bede's model and guide for this typological and ecclesiological interpretation is Tyconius, whom he warmly acknowledges in the preface to *Expositio Apocalypseos* both for his exposition of Revelation and for his contributions to the methodology of exegesis. Bede presents this methodology through excerpts from Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*; thus the eminence of the Father effaces the negative reputation of the Donatist.[24]

Tyconian exegesis of John's Apocalypse is a comprehensive response to excessive literalism in the interpretation of Revelation's imagery, and to undisciplined impulses to speculate concerning the timing of the end. It

---

saluatoris futurus et secutura pestis antichristi quae praeconia salutis impugnaret prophetarum praesagio signata est. Vnde sequitur: **Et sicut audistis quia antichristus uenit, nunc antichristi multi facti sunt.** Antichristos dicit hereticos; sed et illi qui fidem catholicam quam confitentur peruersis actibus destruunt antichristi, id est Christo contrarii, iure uocantur qui omnes illo maximo antichristo in fine saeculi uenturo quasi suo capiti testimonium reddunt. Vnde et Paulus de illo ait quia *mysterium iam operatur iniquitatis.* **Vnde scimus quia nouissima hora est**. Vnde? Quia antichristi multi facti sunt. Potest autem etiam sic intelligi quod ait iam tunc nouissimam fuisse horam quia persecutio illius temporis quae ab hereticis ingerebatur magnam similitudinem habuerit ultimae illius persecutionis quae imminente die iudicii uentura est, quamuis haec linguis tantum uesanis ecclesiam uexauerit, illa etiam gladiis sit uexatura ferocibus'. Translation: D. Hurst, *The Commentary on the seven Catholic Epistles of Bede the Venerable* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1985), 175–6. Bold type indicates lemmata of the biblical text: 1 John 2.18.

[23] *Expositio Apocalypseos* (ed. R. Gryson, CCSL 121A), 5, lines 1–4: 'Descriptis ecclesiae operibus, quae esset et qualis futura esset, recapitulat a Christi natiuitate eadem aliter dicturus. Totum enim tempus ecclesiae uariis in hoc libro figuris repetit'.

[24] Bede, *Expositio Apocalypseos*, preface, lines 37–125. Bede's considerable debt to Tyconius was underscored by G. Bonner, *Saint Bede in the tradition of western Apocalyptic commentary* (Jarrow Lecture, 1966) and is discussed by T.W. Mackay, 'Bede's biblical criticism: the Venerable Bede's summary of Tyconius' *Liber regularum*', in *Saints, scholars, and heroes*, eds M.H. King and W.M. Stevens (Collegeville, MN, 1979), 209–32, at 213–19; and 'Sources and style in Bede's *Commentary on the Apocalypse*', in *Studia Patristica, vol. 30*, ed. E.A. Livingstone (Leuven, 1997), 54–60; as well as J-M. Vercruysse, 'Bède lecteur de Tyconius dans l'Expositio Apocalypseos', in *Bède le Vénérable entre tradition et postérité*, eds S. Lebecq, M. Perrin and O. Szerwiniack (Lille, 2005), 19–30. Bede's commentary is a major resource for the reconstruction of Tyconius's lost and mutilated work, as detailed by R. Gryson in the introductions to his new edition and translation: *Tyconii Afri Expositio Apocalypseos. Accedunt eiusdem expositionis a quodam retratatae fragmenta Tauriensia*, CCSL 107A (Turnhout, 2011); *Tyconius: Commentaire de l'Apocalypse*, Corpus Christianorum in Translation 10 (Turnhout, 2011).

consistently uncouples biblical prophecy from mere prediction by stressing the unique rhetoric of Scripture and the complex way in which symbols function. Temporal sequences in Revelation are not linear, but 'recapitulative', moving back and forth between past, present and future. The book has a single theme: the Church itself, the Body of Christ extending its mission from the Incarnation to the end of time. All the 'prophecies' of this book are *figurae* of this central mystery.[25]

Bede elaborates on this Tyconian theme to offer a first sketch of the 'history of the future' that Peter Darby elaborates on in his contribution to this volume (Chapter 5). Bede does this by raising an *historical* barrier between the present and the end times. This barrier is constituted by three real-time events which, on the authority of Augustine (*De civitate Dei* 20.30), will inaugurate the dénouement of the world: the return of Elijah (whom Bede pairs with Enoch as the 'two witnesses' of Revelation 11),[26] the conversion of the Jews and the rise and fall of Antichrist. This means that the sixth age is 'homogenous', and until these preconditions are fulfilled, no disaster, natural or human, can be read as an indication that the end of the world has actually arrived. However, no one can know exactly when this sequence of events will be initiated; it is a timeline without a deadline.

Bede's commentary on Revelation reinforces this message by underscoring the difference between the first six items in any sequence of seven put forward by

---

[25] Bede, *Expositio Apocalypseos*, preface, lines 1–2: 'Apocalypsis sancti Iohannis, in qua bella et incendia intestina ecclesiae suae deus *uerbis figurisque* reuelare dignatus est ...' (my emphasis). On Bede's 'cautious apocalypticism', see Darby, 'Time shift', 636–9. On Tyconius's approach to Revelation, see Gryson's introduction to his translation of Tyconius's commentary (cited in previous footnote), ch.1, as well as P. Fredriksen, 'Tyconius and the end of the world', *Revue des Études Augustiniennes*, 28 (1982), 59–75; 'Apocalypse and redemption in Early Christianity from John of Patmos to Augustine of Hippo', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 45 (1991), 151–83; and 'Tyconius and Augustine on the Apocalypse' in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, eds Emmerson and McGinn, 20–37. The classic study is T. Hahn, *Tyconius-Studien. Ein Beitrag zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte des vierten Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig, 1900).

[26] *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 17, lines 132–3. Gryson (CCSL 121A, 378) notes that no direct source for this identification of the two prophets with Enoch and Elijah has been found. This passage ('Quidam duos prophetas Enoch et Heliam interpretantur ... fidelium corda confirment') is, however, found verbatim in a 6th century tract from Vivarium entitled *De duobus testibus*, surviving in a unique copy in Vatican Library Reg. lat. 2077, fols 78r–v; *cf.* F. Troncarelli, 'Il consolato dell'anticristo', *Studi medievali ser. 3*, 30 (1989), 567–92. Dr Luciana Cuppo Csaki is preparing a critical edition of this text as part of her forthcoming edition and translation of Cassiodorus's *Complexiones in Apocalypsi* for the Library of Early Christianity (Catholic University of America Press). The tradition is nonetheless an ancient one: see R.J. Bauckham, 'The martyrdom of Enoch and Elijah: Jewish or Christian', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 95 (1976), 447–58.

John's text, and the seventh item in that series. Following Tyconius, Bede observes that Revelation is divided into seven *periochae* or sections. The first six correspond to six thematically distinct aspects of the Church's experience throughout the whole of the sixth age; the seventh refers to the world to come. Some of these *periochae* are themselves structured around sevens: seven seals (Revelation 5–7), seven trumpets (Revelation 8–11) and seven vials (Revelation 15–16). Bede remarks that in each case, the inspired text takes us through the first six, before moving to the next *figura* to 'recapitulate' the story of the sixth age again:

> According to the custom of this book, he [John] maintains a sequence up to the number six, and then passing over the seventh, he recapitulates, and concludes the two narratives, as if following in order, with the seventh. But this recapitulation must be understood in context, for sometimes he recapitulates from the origin of the suffering, sometimes from the mid-point, and sometimes only from the final assault or not much before. Nonetheless he keeps to this rule of recapitulating after the sixth [point].[27]

For example, in the case of the seven seals of Revelation 6:

> In the first seal is seen the glory of the primitive Church; in the next three, the threefold war waged against her; in the fifth, the glory of those who triumph in this war; in the sixth, those things which are to come in the time of Antichrist; and briefly recapitulating what was said before, in the seventh he discerns the beginning of the eternal rest.[28]

Bede understands the vision of the Seven Seals as referring to the whole history of the Church, but only pins the first and final seals to concrete events; the intervening ones symbolise recurring or generic conditions, namely persecution and martyrdom. In the sixth seal, on the other hand, is announced the final persecution, which will be unlike all the others, specifically because it will be

[27] *Expositio Apocalypseos*, preface, lines 16–23: 'Vbi iuxta consuetudinem libri istius usque ad sextum numerum ordinem custodit et praetermisso septimo recapitulat ac duas narrationes quasi ordinem secutus septimo concludit. Sed et ipsa recapitulatio pro locis intellegenda est; aliquando enim ab origine passionis, aliquando a medio tempore, aliquando de sola ipsa nouissima pressura aut non multo ante dicturus recapitulat. Illud tamen fixum seruat, ut a sexto recapitulet'. Translation: F. Wallis, *Bede: Commentary on Revelation* (Liverpool, 2013), 101–2.

[28] *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 7, lines 7–11: 'In primo igitur sigillo decus ecclesiae primitiuae, in sequentibus tribus triforme contra eam bellum, in quinto gloriam sub hoc bello triumphatorum, in sexto illa quae tempore uentura sunt antichristi, et paululum superioribus recapitulatis in septimo cernit initium quietis aeternae'. Translation: Wallis, *Commentary on Revelation*, 140.

led by Antichrist. After the sixth seal, the sequence is interrupted by the signing of the Twelve tribes (Revelation 7.1–8) and the vision of the beatitude of the 'multitude which no man could number' who 'came out of the great tribulation' (Revelation 7.9 and 7.14), that Bede identifies as Antichrist's.[29] And when the seventh seal is opened, 'there was silence in heaven for about half an hour' (Revelation 8.1), which Bede, following Jerome, interprets as the forty-five day 'refreshment of the saints' that will follow the defeat of Antichrist.[30]

The seven trumpets of Revelation 8 'recapitulate' this same sequence using a different array of *figurae*:

> Its first trumpet signifies the general destruction of the wicked by fire and hail; the second, [signifies] the Devil who, expelled from the Church, burns more fiercely in the sea of this world; the third, the heretics who lapse from the Church and corrupt the streams of Holy Scripture; the fourth, the fall of the false brethren, [symbolised] by the darkening of the stars; the fifth, a greater infestation of heretics, heralding the time of Antichrist; the sixth, the overt war of Antichrist and his followers against the Church, and (through an inserted recapitulation from the coming of the Lord) the destruction of this adversary; the seventh, the Day of Judgement, in which the Lord will reward his own, and exterminate those who corrupted the earth.[31]

Here Bede once again isolates the end times in the sixth and seventh trumpets, though it is telling that he sees 'a greater infestation of heretics' in the fifth seal as 'heralding' the end. Indeed, heresy seems to be an exception to Bede's general rule against reading the troubles of the Sixth Age as immediate indicators of doom. Commenting on Revelation 9.12 ('One woe is past; and behold, two woes are yet to come') Bede states that the first woe – the one which is already here – is heresy. The two others are Antichrist himself and the Last Judgement.[32] This reflection seems to be original to Bede, as no source has been traced. On

[29] *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 10, lines 40–41.

[30] *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 10, lines 78–88.

[31] *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 11, lines 3–14: '... cuius prima tuba communem impiorum in igne et grandine designat interitum,secunda propulsum de ecclesia diabolum mare saeculi ardentius incendentem, tertia hereticos ecclesia decidentes sanctae scripturae flumina corrumpentes, quarta falsorum fratrum in siderum obscuratione defectum, quinta maiorem hereticorum infestationem tempus antichristi praecurrentium, sexta apertum antichristi et suorum contra ecclesiam bellum et, recapitulatione ab aduentu domini interserta, eiusdem aduersarii destructionem, septima diem iudicii, quo mercedem dominus suis redditurus et exterminaturus est eos qui corruperunt terram'. Translation: Wallis, *Commentary on Revelation*, 161.

[32] *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 13, lines 92–5.

the other hand, the first through fourth trumpets are symbols of recurrent and unspecific troubles. The 'false brethren' of the fourth trumpet 'often' cloud the beauty of the Church. Sometimes they are seduced by the world's prosperity, sometimes daunted by its adversity; all this has happened, and will happen again, many times and for many reasons. Even the ominous arch-heretics of the fifth trumpet are situated firmly in the indeterminate present; Bede observes that the 'five months' when their avatars, the locusts, have license to torture (Revelation 9.5) 'signifies the time of this age, because of the five senses which we use in this life'.[33] With the sounding of the sixth trumpet the final conflict, the war against Antichrist, begins (Revelation 9.13), but 'the changeable variety of the times of this world' will only 'cease' when the seventh trumpet finally sounds in Revelation 11.15.[34] Bede proclaims:

> The previous six trumpets, which are likened to the ages of this world, announced the varying courses of the Church's wars. But the seventh, announcing the eternal sabbath, indicates the victory and the supreme rule of the true king.[35]

This is the only passage in the commentary where Bede refers to the schema of the six world-ages as a whole, but he equates the *saeculi praesentis aetates* to the history of the Church, *i.e.* the Sixth Age itself, including its closing scenario in the time of Antichrist.[36] The fact that Bede makes so little of the parallel between the repeated sixes of Revelation and the six world-ages is noteworthy; it is as if he wished to detach the prophesies of John from any chronological frame apart from the timeline of the final conflict: the three and a half years of the preaching of the Two Witnesses (identified by Bede as Enoch and Elijah), the equal time-span of Antichrist's reign and the forty-five day 'refreshment of the saints'.

Other features of the Revelation commentary reinforce this impression. For example, Bede either omits passages from Revelation that claim that the

---

[33] *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 13, lines 40–42: 'Tempus quippe saeculi quinque mensibus propter quinquepertitum sensum, quo in hac uita utimur, significat'.

[34] *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 15, lines 48–9: '... sed mutabilis saecularium temporum uarietas in nouissima tuba cessabit'.

[35] *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 18, lines 3–6: 'Sex tubae priores saeculi praesentis aetatibus conparatae uarios bellorum ecclesiae denuntiauere concursus, septima uero sabbati aeterni nuntia uictoriam tantum et imperium ueri regis indicat'. Translation: Wallis, *Commentary on Revelation*, 187.

[36] See also Bede's exegesis of Revelation 8.6, which compares the sevenfold circling of the walls of Jericho to 'the totality of the *time of the Church*' (*totum ecclesiae tempus*): *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 11, lines 50–53. Bede stands in contrast to Aldhelm, who explicitly links the sevenfold circuit of the walls of Jericho to the world's seven ages in both the *De virginitate prosa* and the *Epistola ad Acircium*. *Cf.* Darby, 'Time shift', 631.

end is coming soon, or explains them away.[37] He avoids reference to the natural disasters and human conflicts that herald the final days in the Synoptic Gospels: earthquakes, astronomical omens and wars.[38] For example, the opening of the sixth seal triggers an earthquake, after which the sun is darkened, the moon turns to blood, the stars fall from heaven and mountains collapse (Revelation 6.12–17). Bede states that this earthquake refers literally (*iuxta litteram*) to the Day of Judgement; in other words, its literal meaning is allegorical.[39] It could not possibly, Bede says, be an 'ordinary' earthquake, because it affects the whole earth, and earthquakes are purely local.[40]

Finally, Bede deliberately edits the lemma of Revelation 13.18 to remove John's invitation to calculate the Beast's name by decoding the number 666; for Bede, the name is not a personal one, but a generic metaphor of evil. Indeed, he proposes several ways to render the number 666 – 'teitan', alluding to Antichrist's arrogance, or various Greek words which Bede, following Primasius, interprets as 'contrary to honour' or 'I deny'.[41] Significantly, this is the only time that Bede mentions Primasius by name, though he actually uses Primasius's commentary very heavily throughout the commentary; perhaps Bede thought his refusal to name an individual necessitated some authoritative back-up. Bede then adds his own interpretation: 666 is a number symbol standing for completion or perfection, as witness the 666 talents of gold offered in annual tribute to King Solomon (1 Kings 10.14–15), and it alludes to Antichrist's illegitimate appropriation of the homage due to the true king.[42]

Bede's studied deflection of any hints that Revelation is a straightforward blueprint of events to come was, of course, entirely in line with the views of Augustine and Jerome, as well as his principal sources, Tyconius and Primasius. In practice, Bede uses Tyconius and Primasius as concealed exegetical scaffolding onto which he hangs prominently ascribed quotations from Augustine, Jerome and Gregory. Bede wanted his interpretation of Revelation to be coherent,

---

[37] For examples, see Darby, *Bede and the end of time*, 189–91.

[38] It is worth recalling that Bede's companion volume to *De temporibus*, *De natura rerum* (ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123A, 189–234), also stuck closely to scientific explanations of eclipses, earthquakes and even the fires of Mount Etna. Both works were composed in 703. In this respect, Bede follows the lead of his major source, Isidore of Seville; see J. Fontaine (ed.), *Isidore de Seville: Traité de la nature* (Bordeaux, 1960), 3–6. Bede goes even further than Isidore in de-mystifying natural disasters, by eliminating Isidore's allegories: Kendall and Wallis, *On the nature of things and On times*, 19.

[39] *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 8, lines 42–5.

[40] *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 8, lines 9–11. *Cf. De natura rerum*, 49.

[41] *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 22, lines 79–101.

[42] *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 22, lines 83–101.

authoritative and orthodox, even though the great Fathers were not coherent, Primasius was not particularly authoritative, and Tyconius was certainly not orthodox. This is a truly creative, and even bold act of synthesis. Bede's idea of following in the footsteps of the Fathers went beyond replicating their doctrine, or even filling their gaps. It was about interiorising their methods, collaborating in and continuing their work.[43] It is an ambitious agenda for a neophyte, but around the year 700, it may also have been a necessary and urgent one.

The Commentary on Revelation and the Year 700

Let us return to Acca's court, and Bede's dedicatory letter to the commentary on Acts. The anxious tone of the letter suggests that the heresy charges against Bede had not dissipated. Plegwine may not have done as Bede requested; 'David' may not have cleared his name – indeed, it is not clear if, when or how Bede actually managed to dispel this accusation. It was still a source of anger and concern when he composed *De temporum ratione* in 725, where he pointedly justified his adhesion to the chronology of the *hebraica veritas* in both his preface and in Chapter 67. The death of Wilfrid and the accession of Acca represented both an opportunity and a danger. Acca was a trusted member of Wilfrid's inner circle, so even if he was in fact 'David', he may have shared his master's apparent ambivalence towards the implications of Bede's chronology in *De temporibus*. Hwætberht may have sent the commentary on Revelation to Acca at the same time, and for the same purpose, as Bede sent his letter to Plegwine – namely, to vindicate Bede's orthodoxy and explain his views on eschatology. If so, it would explain why Bede pointedly mentions Acca's favourable reception of the Revelation commentary in the Acts dedication. In his conspiratorial allusion to their shared knowledge of the *obstrepentes causae*, Bede does not mention whether Acca had read *De temporibus* at all, let alone the letter to Plegwine; instead, he relies on the Revelation commentary to plead his orthodoxy concerning the future. The Revelation commentary, in short, conveys the same message as these other works.

The letter to Plegwine hints that Bede was fighting an uphill battle. As noted above, he himself had come across a work by an unnamed 'chronographer' who dated the Incarnation to *Annus Mundi* 5500, who asserted that the world would end in the year 6000, and who was apparently writing in the fourth century.

[43] Bede's exegesis of Revelation 21.12, where the *doctores* are said to 'follow the footsteps of the apostles (*apostolorum uestigia … sequentes*)' is thus the earliest appearance of Bede's signature phrase for his own life-mission: *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 37, lines 33–4.

The scheme in question is mentioned in the *Cologne prologue* of *c*. 395, a text found in the 'Sirmond' computus compilation, ultimately of Irish provenance. Bede definitely had access to this anthology and very likely knew the *Cologne prologue*, though some of the details of his description of the chronographer's heresy seem to match more closely Quintus Julius Hilarianus's *De cursu temporum*, composed *c*. 397.[44] What is worth noting is that regardless of who the *chronographus heresiarches* was, Bede came across his work in the library at his own monastery, Wearmouth-Jarrow. Indeed, the library seems to have contained many more texts expounding such dangerous calculations.[45] In the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* Bede complains:

> On this matter I confess I am quite grieved, and often irritated to the limit of what is permissible, or even beyond, when every day I am asked by rustics how many years are left in the final millennium of the world, or learn from them that they know that the final millennium is in progress, when our Lord in the Gospel did not testify that the time of His advent was near at hand or far off, but commanded us to keep watch *with our loins girded and our lamps lit*, and to *wait for Him* until *He should come* [*cf.* Luke 12.35–7]. For I notice that when in conversation with the brothers the occasion arises for us to dispute concerning the Ages of the world, certain of the less learned ones allege that we are speaking of 6,000 years, and there are those who think that this world will end at 7,000 years because it unfolded in seven days. The said doctor Augustine in his explanation of Psalm 6 often openly accused these people of temerity, saying amongst other things: *For if this day is to come after 7,000 years, everybody can add these to the computed years of his Advent. How will it be that the Son does not know [the time]? ... What does this*

[44] C.W. Jones identified the author of the *Cologne prologue* (ed. B. Krusch, *Studien zur christlich-mittelalterlichen Chronologie. Der 84Jährige Ostercyclus und seine Quellen*, 227–35) as Bede's anonymous chronographer: *Bedae opera de temporibus* (Cambridge, MA, 1943), 135, n. 2. W. Levison advocated for Hilarianus: 'Bede as historian', in *Bede, his life, times, and writings*, ed. Thompson, 111–51, at 115, n. 4. On this 'Sirmond' anthology and Bede, see C.W. Jones, 'The 'lost' Sirmond manuscript of Bede's computus', *English Historical Review*, 52 (1937), 204–13; and D. Ó Cróinín, 'The Irish provenance of Bede's computus', *Peritia*, 2 (1983), 229–47. See the illuminating discussion by J.T. Palmer, 'The ordering of time', in *Abendländische Apokalyptik*, eds Wieser, Zolles, Feik, Zolles and Schlöndorff, 605–18, esp. 611.

[45] An Irish text synchronising *Annus Mundi* and the year of the Passion, based on Victorius of Aquitaine, and brought forward to *Annus Passionis* 631 (AD 658), projected that the world would end in 141 years, at *Annus Mundi* 6000. It is also found in the 'Sirmond' collection: see Ó Cróinín, 'Irish provenance', 234.

> *strange presumption seek, which hopes [to find] the most certain day of the Lord by counting 7,000 years?* [Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 6.1][46]

Some of Bede's brothers apparently opted for an alternative 'millennial week' based on a 7,000-year *saeculum*. They could hardly have based their speculations on Augustine, who as Bede points out with some satisfaction, scornfully dismisses this figure as just as absurd as 6,000 years, and for the same reason. But these monks, if somewhat misled, were certainly not uneducated; a text entitled by its editors *Laterculus Malalianus*, a paraphrase of the chronology of the sixth century Byzantine scholar John Malalas, propounding just such a chronological scheme, was produced in the scholarly circle of Theodore of Tarsus and Hadrian at Canterbury, the most prestigious centre of learning in England in the 7th century. Evidently the *Laterculus* or something like it was also on the shelves of Jarrow.[47]

The 'rustics' who (Bede says) hounded him to specify the number of years left until the Last Judgement were probably his own monastic brethren. If Bede had to repeatedly field questions about the date of the end of the world, some (perhaps many) people were genuinely anxious that it was nearly upon them.

---

[46] *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 15, lines 261–85: 'Vnde et ipse satis doleo, fateor, et quantum licet uel amplius irasci soleo quoties a rusticis interrogor quot de ultimo milliario saeculi restent anni. Atque contra ipsi ab illis sciscitari unde nouerunt quod nunc ultimum agatur milliarium, cum dominus in euangelio non tempus aduentus sui prope uel procul esse testetur, sed nos semper accinctis lumbis ac lucernis ardentibus uigilare ac se expectare donec ueniat iubeatur. Animaduerto enim quia cum sermonem facientes ad fratres incidente occasione de aetatibus saeculi disputamus, quidam simpliciorum sex annorum millia nos praedicare autumant, nec defuere qui septem annorum millibus saeculi huius statum quia et septem diebus uoluitur terminandum esse putarent. Quos saepe dictus doctor augustinus in expositione psalmi sexti manifeste temeritatis redarguit, dicens inter alia: si enim post septem annorum millia ille dies uenturus est, omnis homo potest annis computatis aduentum eius addiscere. Vbi erit ergo quod nec filius hoc nouit? ... quid sibi uult nescio quae praesumptio quae annis computatis certissimum sperat post septem annorum millia diem domini?'. Translation: Wallis, *Reckoning of Time*, 413–14.

[47] J. Stevenson, *The 'Laterculus Malalianus' and the school of Archbishop Theodore* (Cambridge, 1995) and 'Theodore and the Laterculus Malalianus', in *Archbishop Theodore: commemorative studies on his life and influence*, ed. M. Lapidge (Cambridge, 1995), 204–21. See the perceptive comments of Peter Darby on this text in the context of the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* in *Bede and the end of time*, 51–7. Darby argues for the influence of the *Laterculus* on Aldhelm at 57–64; see also 'Time shift', 629–34. J. Siemens suggests (cautiously) that Bede knew the *Laterculus Malalianus*, and detects its influence in his *In Lucae evangelium expositio*: *The Christology of Theodore of Tarsus: the Laterculus Malalianus and the person and work of Christ* (Turnhout, 2010) and 'Christ's restoration of Humankind in the *Laterculus Malalianus*, 14', *Heythrop Journal*, 48 (2007), 18–28, at 26, n. 20. I am grateful to Peter Darby for drawing my attention to Siemens's work.

No eclipse or comet seems to have provoked their panic. Rather, it was the fatal *Annus Mundi* 6000, because as of 701, there was only a century left until this deadline.[48] The century threshold was an ominous date, the beginning of the final countdown. Julius Hilarianus's *De cursu temporum* ended with a scenario of the end-times based on Revelation, declared that Antichrist would come in *Annus Mundi* 6000, and closed with a bald statement that there were only 101 years left to the end.[49] Were this work known in Bede's milieu, it would serve as a witness to the fascination of the final century, as well as to the importance of understanding Revelation aright.

These concerns find an echo in Bede's unusual exegesis of Revelation 20.7. The period when Satan will range freely – three years and six months – is so short that it hardly is worth counting; rather, it should be included in the (entirely symbolic) one thousand years which have just finished. Such an assimilation is appropriate because – and this is Bede's original addition – '700 years and however many [years] God might wish' are called 'an hour' by the Apostle (i.e. John in 1 John 2.18)'.[50] Bede has unhooked the apostle's 'hour' from its traditional association with 500 years, but the figure of 700 years 'and however many [years] God might wish' is striking, and would support the hypothesis that AD 701 was a date that roused concern. By reminding Acca of the commentary on Revelation, Bede was thus reinforcing his anti-apocalyptic reading of 1 John, a reading forcefully asserted in the letter to Plegwine and in Bede's commentary on the Catholic Epistles.

These circumstances might also explain why Hwætberht arranged to send a copy of the commentary on Revelation to Acca in the first place. Acca may not have thought Bede a heretic, but he may not have grasped, or accepted, the

---

[48] In a landmark study, Richard Landes argues that Bede's revision of *Annus Mundi* chronology in *De temporibus* was deliberately undertaken to head off panic about the approaching year 6000: 'Lest the Millennium be fulfilled: apocalyptic expectations and the pattern of western chronography, 100–800 CE', in *The use and abuse of eschatology in the Middle Ages*, eds W. Verbeke, D. Verhelst and A. Welkenhuysen (Leuven, 1988), 137–209. On the evidence for apocalypticism in the eighth century, see Wallis, *Commentary on Revelation*, 51–8.

[49] As Hilarianus dated the Passion to AM 5530, and was writing in 397, this would work out to about AD 498: *De cursu temporum* (ed. C. Frick, *Chronica minora*, 153–74), at page 171; the relevant passage is translated by B. McGinn, *Visions of the End: apocalyptic traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York, NY, 1979), 52–3. See also O. Irshai, 'Dating the Eschaton: Jewish and Christian apocalyptic calculations in Late Antiquity', in *Apocalyptic time*, ed. A.I. Baumgarten (Leiden, 2000), 113–53, at 141–53; B.E. Daley, *The hope of the Early Church: a handbook of Early Christian eschatology* (Cambridge, 1991), Chapter 10.

[50] *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 35, lines 89–92: 'Non enim conputandae sunt tam exiguae reliquiae, cum septingenti et quot deus uoluerit anni 'hora; ab apostolo appellati sunt'.

fine points of the letter to Plegwine either. Acca needed, and may even have demanded, clarification. Bede's response was to drop the Luke commentary temporarily and polish up the Acts commentary so that it could be rapidly copied out for the bishop. By pairing Revelation with the history of the Church in the Sixth Age inaugurated in Acts, Bede underscored his typological reading of Revelation, further detaching it from any association with chronological speculations or unhealthy concern with portents.[51]

Conclusions

The key to understanding Bede's motives for commenting on Revelation at all, and for choosing to comment on it when he did, lie in the use he made of this work in his dedicatory epistle to the commentary on Acts, addressed to Acca. The *Expositio Apocalypseos* effectively stands in for Bede's controversial *De temporibus* as a statement of orthodox belief concerning the future. Bede expects Acca to recognise that it makes the same argument as the letter to Plegwine, namely that the time of the end cannot be calculated, even if its events are to some extent foreknown. Bede's careful distillation of the Tyconian ecclesiological and typological reading of Revelation, here somewhat disguised to look as if it came from the pens of Augustine, Jerome and Gregory, effectively gives the most solemn patristic endorsement to the views on the future enunciated in Bede's computistical treatise. The implication is clear: since Acca had approved of the commentary on Revelation, he must also approve Bede's orthodoxy against his detractors. But these implications also support the argument that Bede wrote a commentary on Revelation in the first place to counter mistaken views about knowledge of the future: views that were being discussed and perhaps taught in Canterbury; views that were taken for granted in Hexham and Jarrow; views that could be found on the pages of books in Bede's own monastery's library. That Bede was still fighting this battle in 725, when he composed *De temporum ratione*, shows that his notions of an orthodox theology of the future continued to be contested for several years thereafter.

---

[51] It should be noted that in early medieval multi-volume Bibles, Revelation was frequently bundled with the Acts of the Apostles and sometimes the Catholic Epistles as well. Such an arrangement can be seen in the 'Ezra' miniature in the *Codex Amiatinus* (fol. 5r): see P. Michelli, 'What's in the cupboard? Ezra and Matthew reconsidered', in *Northumbria's golden age*, eds Hawkes and Mills, 345–58. Bede's commentary on Revelation often travelled with either the *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum* or *In epistulas septem catholicas*, or both: Wallis, *Commentary on Revelation*, 86–92.

Perhaps the most important thing that this episode reveals is that Bede's exegesis was not always, and perhaps not ever, a systematic programme designed to fill gaps, nor was it always driven by the agendas of others. The commentary on Revelation was a response to a particular theological problem that surfaced in connection with a specific date. Bede chose to tackle this problem through exegesis, and he selected the book that he wanted to use as his vehicle. This is not to claim that this or any commentary by Bede is merely topical – a polemic in exegetical clothing – but to underscore the close bond between his aspirations for his life's work and his engagement with the world in which he was embedded. When he imagines the apostle John rejoicing 'in company with the choirs of the High-Enthroned' and simultaneously 'turning his sacred eyes to the world that lay beneath' where 'wave-wandering wheels [are] everywhere adrift' he might well be describing himself.[52]

[52] *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 'Versus Bedae Presbyteri', lines 4–6: 'Regis et altithroni gaudet adesse choris. / Hinc ubi subiectum sacra lumina uergit in orbem, / Currere fluctiuagas cernit ubique rotas'. Translation: Wallis, *Commentary on Revelation*, 99.

This page has been left blank intentionally

Chapter 2

Why did Heresy Matter to Bede? Present and Future Contexts

Alan Thacker

Bede, famously, was much exercised by heretics. They feature prominently in his work, above all in his biblical commentaries. As Charles Plummer long ago pointed out, 'there is hardly any form of heresy known in his time which is not refuted in his writings'; and in a most helpful footnote, Plummer went on to name some 29 heretics and heresies denounced by Bede.[1] In addition to this plethora of reference to specific forms of unorthodox belief, condemnation of heresy in general also features prominently in Bede's writings;[2] indeed in this paper it will be argued that these general denunciations are often more revealing than Bede's attacks on individual heresies, which are generally couched in simplified terms, focused upon a single aspect of often complex teaching.[3] It might be thought that in the early eighth century, when doctrinal deviance was scarcely an issue in the Latin West, such concerns represented a strong preoccupation with the past,[4] but this paper will argue that they had much more to do with the present and the immediate future.[5] Heretics and their doings were generally referred to in the present tense; for Bede they were part of the here and now.[6]

---

1 C. Plummer, *VBOH*, I, lii–liii.

2 See e.g. *De temporibus* (ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123C, 585–611), 22, lines 48–9; *Homiliarum euangelii libri II* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 122, 1–378), 2.25, line 60; *In epistulas septem catholicas* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 121, 181–342), *In epistolam II Petri*, 2, lines 2–4 and 159–62; *In Lucae evangelium expositio* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 120, 5–425), 2, line 1945; *In primam partem Samuhelis* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119, 5–287), 4, lines 2200–217; *In Cantica Canticorum* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119B, 167–375), 2.2.15, lines 600–604, 2.2.17, 733–6, 2.3.7, lines 296–8, 2.3.8, lines 336–8; *In Ezram et Neemiam* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A, 237–392), 1, lines 1640–46, 1670–73. *Cf.* M.T.A. Carroll, *The Venerable Bede: his spiritual teachings* (Washington D.C., 1946), 94–5.

3 *Cf.* the comments of Carroll, *Venerable Bede*, 96.

4 See e.g. H. Mayr-Harting, *The coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd edition (University Park, PA, 1991), 210.

5 *Cf.* A. Holder, 'Hunting snakes in the grass: Bede as Heresiologist', in *'Listen, O Isles, unto me'*, eds E. Mullins and D. Scully (Cork, 2011), 105–14, esp. 107–8.

6 See e.g. *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 2200–217, quoted below at footnote 72.

'Holy preachers', he declared in his commentary on the Song of Songs, 'guard the present quiet and peace of the Church against the attacks of heretics';[7] and clearly he classed himself among those holy teachers burdened with the duty of fending off the 'darkness' of such deviants lest it violate 'the condition of the present Church'.[8] Heretical thoughts could always be rethought; so any heresy was for Bede a latent infection with an enduring capacity to flare up and attack the Church with fresh symptoms.[9]

Bede's heretics are not simply defined by their belief in a variety of unorthodox doctrines. They share a number of general characteristics. Above all, they are cunning and full of deceit, imbued with ingenious craftiness, *versutia*. Bede repeatedly refers to their *fraudes*, their deceitful tricks, their feigning of virtue and of pure doctrine to mislead the faithful.[10] Heretics are false: they are false brethren, false catholics.[11] Discordant among themselves, they provoke dissension within the Church; pretending to catholic doctrine they attack its unity from within.[12] Such treachery indeed renders them more dangerous to the Church than its open enemies who attack it from outside.[13] Often guilty of

---

[7] *In Cantica Canticorum*, 2.3.7, lines 296–7: 'praesentem ecclesiae quietem et pacem praedicatores sancti contra hereticorum tuentur incursus'. Translation: A. Holder, *The Venerable Bede: On the Song of Songs and selected writings* (Mahwah, New Jersey, 2011), 98.

[8] *In Cantica Canticorum*, 2.3.8, lines 336–8: 'Timent enim doctores sancti ne per tenebras hereticorum ecclesiae status violetur praesentis'. Translation: Holder, *On the Song of Songs*, 99.

[9] For example *In prouerbia Salomonis* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119B, 23–163), 1.7.10–11, lines 43–5: 'Nulla est heresis quae primis sit contenta discipulis; hi sunt enim domus eius, sed semper novos quos decipiat quaerit' (quoted by Carroll, *Venerable Bede*, 96).

[10] E.g. *In Cantica Canticorum*, 2.2.15, lines 604–9; *In prouerbia Salomonis*, 1.5.6, lines 26–30, 1.5.19, lines 131–3; 2.11.9, lines 46–8; 3.28.10, lines 16–18; *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 2, lines 1208–13, 2124–30; 4, lines 1723–30.

[11] E.g. *In epistulas septem catholicas*, *In epistolam I Petri*, 3, lines 245–6; *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, lines 1391–3; 4, lines 2330–31; *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 1, lines 1608–10, 1640–42; 3, lines 909–14.

[12] E.g. *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 2, lines 1233–40; *In prouerbia Salomonis*, 2.11, lines 46–8; *In Cantica Canticorum*, 2.2.15, lines 586–617.

[13] *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, lines 2977–9: 'Sine ulla autem dubietate plus gravant ecclesiam falsi fratres qui intus quam manifesti hostes qui hanc deforis impugnant'. This passage is discussed in A.T. Thacker, 'Bede, the Britons and the Book of Samuel', in *Early Medieval studies in memory of Patrick Wormald*, eds S.D. Baxter, C.E. Karkov, J.L. Nelson and D.A.E. Pelteret (Farnham, 2009), 129–47, at 141–2. *Cf. In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 2038–43: 'non solum autem qui arma certantes vel argumenta disputantes contra bonos ferunt, sed etiam qui exempla pravitatis sub fratrum nomine praeferentes piorum aspectibus ostentant in Iezrahel, id est semen Dei, ascendentes zizaniis hoc diabolici seminis inficere temptant'.

wicked and impure behaviour,[14] they are frequently linked with bad catholics and with schismatics whom Bede saw as exemplifying similar behaviour and attitudes of mind.[15] Often, Bede denounces heresy in the most harsh and vehement terms.[16] Heretics are as cunning as serpents, treacherous, perfidious and depraved; their beliefs are madness, *vesania*, born in the blindness of lamentable thought.[17] In a gloating reference to the death of Arius in 336, Bede finds the heretic's revolting end from a flux of the bowels worthy torment for his false teaching.[18] Bede's language is frequently defensive. The Church is an enclosed garden, a *hortus conclusus*, fortified by the protection of its Lord and Redeemer.[19] It is envisaged as an embattled fortress under constant attack, its walls, gates and ramparts defended by true teachers and preachers against incursion from the outside by pagans and unbelievers and against injury from the inside by heretics, the perfidious enemy within.[20] Bede was especially concerned that the weaker brethren should not fall victim to the cunning and to the skilled rhetoric of the heretic.[21]

Bede's discourse on heresy was, of course, drawn from the fathers, above all Augustine. In many of the biblical commentaries under discussion here, but especially in those on Samuel and on Ezra and Nehemiah, heretics are closely associated with a number of other groups of the reprobate: with false brethren,

---

[14] E.g. *In epistulas septem catholicas*, *In epistolam II Petri*, 2, lines 26–32; *In prouerbia Salomonis*, 1.7, lines 102–8.

[15] See e.g. *In epistulas septem catholicas*, *In epistolam II Iohannis*, lines 69–70; *In Cantica Canticorum*, 2.2.15, lines 611–14; *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 2, lines 1163–9; 4, lines 333–7, 2464–9; *De tabernaculo* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A, 5–139), 2, lines 588–9; *De templo* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A, 143–234), 1, lines 74–9, 675–81; *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 1, lines 1608–10; *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 2.18, lines 42–6; Thacker, 'Bede, the Britons', esp. 136–7.

[16] See e.g. the comments of M.L.W. Laistner, *Thought and letters in Western Europe*, 2nd edition (London, 1957), 160; D. Ó Cróinín, ''New heresy for old': Pelagianism in Ireland and the papal letter of 640', *Speculum*, 60 (1985), 505–16, at 506.

[17] E.g. *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 1, line 1604; 2, lines 1052–79, esp. lines 1066–8: 'Heresis namque solet in caecitate miserae cogitationis non recte praesumpto a doctore verbi semine nasci'. *Cf.* Holder, 'Hunting snakes', esp. 105–7; *In prouerbia Salomonis*, 1.2, lines 106–9; 2.10, lines 107–9; 2.15, lines 25–7; 2.17, lines 25–9.

[18] *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 1, lines 1600–606.

[19] *In Cantica Canticorum*, 3.4.12, lines 760–61.

[20] E.g. *In Cantica Canticorum*, 4.7.4, lines 226–43. In this passage Bede declares that the Church's teachers (*doctores*) 'civitatem Dei quasi turris eminens atque inexpugnabilis ab universorum hostium incursione defendant … quasi turrem se in munimentum sanctae civitatis positos esse comprobant'. *Cf. In Cantica Canticorum*, 4.7.4, lines 293–334; *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 3, lines 755–66.

[21] E.g. *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 2, lines 1208–13; 4, lines 2034–8; 4, lines 2075–8.

bad catholics, schismatics and unbelieving Jews.[22] These are fine distinctions. Heretics are those with a perverted understanding of the faith; false brethren are those who, while pretending to loyal catholicity, ally themselves with the open persecutors of the Church and betray to them its holy mysteries; schismatics are those who persist in separation from the Church; while bad catholics are those who, though nominally accepting true belief, betray their faith by bad practice. All these malignant groups are in some sense within the Church and they clearly overlap in Bede's mind. In his commentary on Ezra, for example, he makes it plain that he regards them all as embraced within the single term 'heretics' (*heretici*), whom he defined as those long separated from the Church by heresies, schism or wicked works.[23] Their attitudes link them with a further group, the unbelieving Jews, the *Judaei infideles* who persist in their rejection of the Christian faith down to the present age and whose ultimate conversion will usher in the end of the world and the Second Coming of Christ. Indeed, on occasion, Bede expressly says that heretics who profess to be within the Church may actually be worse than the obdurately unbelieving Jews. In one of his homilies, for example, he declared, that the Jews, although they denied it, acknowledged Christ's divinity, whereas the Arians, confessors of Christ's name, did not.[24]

These other, related, groups are characterised in the same terms as heretics. While the faithful display catholic unity, heretics and their associates betray themselves by their discord.[25] Jews, pagans and heretics stand convicted more by their dissension than by the assertions of spiritual writings;[26] they will continue to disturb the Church until the end of the present world.[27] Above all, they are all characterised by treachery (*perfidia*). In an arresting metaphor in his commentary on Samuel, Bede associates the *Judaei infideles* with heretics, *deteriores infidelibus*, worse than unbelievers, both building their fortresses of treachery, *castra perfidia*, over the fountain of baptismal grace.[28]

---

[22] Thacker, 'Bede, the Britons', 136–7.

[23] *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 3, lines 664–83. *Cf. In primam partem Samuhelis*, 2, lines 1050–1276, an episode which Bede expressly says refers to heretics in general (lines 1053–5) but which at another point (lines 1063–9) he also applies to heretics, schismatics, pagans and the unbelieving Jews.

[24] *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 1.23, lines 274–9.

[25] *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 2, lines 1233–40. *Cf. In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 1810–12.

[26] *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 2, lines 2076–9.

[27] *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 3, lines 515–18.

[28] *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 1968–71: 'Si ergo Iudaeos infideles seu deteriores infidelibus hereticos in nomine Israhel figuratos intellegas, ambo super fontem gratiae

Monotheletism

It is highly revealing that despite this strong sense of the contemporaneity and pervasiveness of the threat of what he perceived as heresy, Bede scarcely mentions directly its most recent manifestation, even though his own monastery and its founder were closely involved in fighting it and even though it had played an important part in framing the art and sculpture of the period.[29] In the late 670s the English archbishop, Theodore, took a leading role in the last phases of the western fight against Monothelitism, the imperially sponsored compromise with Monophysitism.[30] Benedict Biscop, founder of Wearmouth, who seems to have been Theodore's envoy in Rome at that time, brought back John, abbot of St Martin's and archchanter at the Vatican, armed with the decrees of Pope Martin I's Lateran synod of 649.[31] Bede only refers to the episode once, in the *Historia ecclesiastica*, in connection with the council of Hatfield, summoned in 679 by Theodore to condemn Monothelitism.[32] In his *Chronica maiora* he gives an account of the dispute and its settlement drawn largely from the *Liber Pontificalis.*[33] Otherwise, he only mentions one leading figure condemned as a Monothelite, Theodore of Pharan (d. *c*. 630), although strangely not in connection with any specifically Monothelite doctrine.[34] Indeed, Bede seems never to have used any term specifically to distinguish 'Monothelites' or 'Monothelitism' at all, simply alluding to 'those who declared that only one will operated in Christ'.[35] That doctrine he attributes variously to the followers

renascentis castra perfida ponunt uni per superbiam despiciendo, alii per heresim violando'. The identification of heresy with *perfidia* is especially intense and vehement in this commentary.

[29] É. Ó Carragáin, *Ritual and the rood: liturgical images and the Old English poems of the Dream of the Rood tradition* (London, 2005), 225–8; É. Ó Carragáin and A.T. Thacker, 'Wilfrid in Rome', in *Wilfrid: abbot, bishop, saint*, ed. N.J. Higham (Donington, 2013), 212–30.

[30] C. Cubitt, 'Wilfrid, a man for his times', in *Wilfrid: abbot, bishop, saint*, ed. Higham, 311–30.

[31] *Historia ecclesiastica* (eds B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors, *BEH*), 4.18.

[32] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.17.

[33] *De temporum ratione* (ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123B, 263–544), 66, lines 1827–63, 1882–1919.

[34] Bede, *In Marci evangelium expositio* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 120, 431–648), 2, lines 128–41. I am grateful to Dr Jennifer O'Reilly for drawing my attention to this reference and for the discussion which follows, which depends upon her papers, 'Bede and Monothelitism', delivered at the International Medieval Congress in Leeds (July 2013) and 'The Image of the Mediator' delivered at 'Producing Christian Culture', an international conference to mark the arrival of the Lindisfarne Gospels in Durham (July, 2013).

[35] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.18. *Cf. In Marci evangelium expositio*, 2, lines 1515–19 and 4, lines 881–4; *De temporum ratione*, 66, lines 1826–9, 1892–4.

of Eutyches[36] and to the Acephalites,[37] both in fact Monophysite opponents of Chalcedonian orthodoxy.[38] Here then we see Bede's attitude to heresy in action; he was not concerned to distinguish in detail between (admittedly related) deviancies – rather he viewed Monothelitism as a reinfection, as it were, of the body of the Church by the older error of Monophysitism.[39] It was this recurrence, this pervasiveness, which dominated Bede's thought, rather than distinguishing between the particularities of complex modes of teaching about the person and nature of Christ. Bede, it seems, was not really interested in the precise definition and categorisation of heretical thought; rather he sought to assimilate any recent manifestation to more ancient forms of deviation; he was more interested in heresy as a state of mind than as a specific set of carefully characterised beliefs.

Pelagianism

Perhaps the heresy with the most potential to be regarded as a continuing threat in Bede's world was Pelagianism; with its emphasis on individual effort, it seems to have appealed particularly to monks. Even more perhaps than Arianism, Pelagianism was one of Bede's favourite targets. Pelagius was, after all, believed to be British,[40] and in the fifth century the British Church had apparently twice appealed to the Gallic bishop, Germanus of Auxerre, for help in dealing with Pelagianism, episodes recorded in the *Historia ecclesiastica*. Bede concludes his account of Germanus's interventions, based exclusively on Constantius of Lyon's *Vita Germani*, by quoting Constantius's statement that the heretics were banished and that in Britain the faith then remained 'undefiled' (*intemerata*) – but with a significant amendment. By adding the words 'for long after that time' (*multo ex eo tempore*), he seems to be hinting that the British were eventually to have further trouble with heresy.[41]

Bede was also aware that in the earlier seventh century Rome had believed that Pelagianism was rife in Ireland. The key text here is the letter sent by the

[36] E.g. *In Marci evangelium expositio*, 2, lines 1515–19; 4, lines 881–4.

[37] *De temporum ratione*, 66, lines 1826–30.

[38] *Cf.* Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae* (ed. W.M. Lindsay, *Etymologiarum siue originum libri XX*), 5.39.39–40; 8.5.65–6.

[39] In this he was in fact following papal propaganda: see, for example, a letter of Pope Agatho from 680–681 (ed. J.P. Migne, PL 87, cols 1161–214), col. 1161.

[40] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 1.10.

[41] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 1.17–21.

pope-elect, John IV, in 640, to the bishop of Armagh and his fellow northern Irish clergy. It is in part recorded by Bede, who is careful to draw attention to the fact that the pope notes that the heresy was of recent origin and involved only some of the Irish.[42] Although the works of Pelagius were undoubtedly popular in Ireland,[43] it seems likely, as Dáibhí Ó Cróinín has suggested, that the papal accusation of heresy stemmed not from any treasuring of the works of the heresiarch, but from a misunderstanding of Irish Paschal practice. Most unfairly, the pope charged them with Quartodecimanism, that is, with the celebration of Easter on the 14th day of the month of Nisan to coincide with the beginning of the Jewish Passover, whether it fell upon a Sunday or not. As Ó Cróinín has argued, the charge seems to have arisen because the Irish were following superseded Easter tables which did indeed permit the celebration of Easter on 14 Nisan, but only if that day was Sunday. It seems very probable that the charge of Pelagianism was connected with that practice. The reasoning was that by failing to place Easter (which represented the New Dispensation of Christian grace) after the Jewish Passover (the Old Dispensation of the Mosaic law), the Quartodecimans, and those who appeared like them, denied that Christ's death and resurrection were the sole means of salvation. They thus, like the Pelagians, denied that the grace of God, manifest in Christ, was the sole means of salvation. Such arguments, which equated any form of deviation from catholic computus that would permit Easter to fall on 14 Nisan with Pelagianism, were certainly approved by Bede. It was used by him in his great work on time, *De temporum ratione*, and it was also used in the letter to King Nechtan of the Picts, issued under Abbot Ceolfrith's name but possibly written by Bede.[44]

What may have been one of Bede's earliest ventures into Old Testament commentary, his treatise on the Song of Songs, was presented in the prologue as written against Julian of Eclanum, Pelagius's most accomplished pupil. Julian was expressly mentioned by Bede as a supporter of Pelagius in his account of the introduction of Pelagianism into Britain in the *Historia ecclesiastica*.[45] The choice of a commentary on the Song of Songs as the vehicle of refutation was determined by the fact that Julian had also commented on that book, most

[42] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 2.19.

[43] J.F. Kenney, *The sources for the early history of Ireland: an introduction and guide* (New York, NY, 1929), 661–3; Ó Cróinín, "New heresy for old".

[44] *De temporum ratione*, 6, lines 69–71; *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.21 (Colgrave and Mynors, *BEH*, 544).

[45] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 1.10.

notably in his treatises, *De amore* and *De bono constantiae*, both now lost.[46] Bede's treatise opens with a discussion of Julian's errors. He was particularly concerned that some at least of Julian's work was being disseminated in Britain under the name of Jerome. There he was referring to a third Pelagian treatise, the *Epistola ad Demetriadem*, known for example to Aldhelm, who quoted from it approvingly in his prose *De virginitate*.[47] Bede is clear that this was by Julian, who, he rather strangely notes, was nourished by (the teaching of) Pelagius as a young boy 'like a little king (*regulus*) in the cavern of a serpent'.[48] (In fact, the *Epistola ad Demetriadem* is now generally credited to Pelagius himself).[49] So, in that instance it seems that Bede was addressing a live issue, namely a book, infected by error, which was circulating among his contemporaries as the work of a catholic doctor.

Contemporary ecclesiastical culture, then, offers more reason for Bede's ardent engagement with heresy than is sometimes allowed.[50] As Holder has pointed out, 'the vehemence of Bede's anti-Pelagian critique … owed something to this habit of associating the Pelagian heresy with the method of Easter dating practiced by some … of the Irish Christians'.[51] That taint, of course, would equally have applied to the Britons, who took even longer than Iona to convert to the catholic Easter. Nevertheless, the unwitting circulation of Pelagian writings and the somewhat strained association of the British and some of the Irish with an alleged form of neo-Pelagianism does not really explain Bede's attacks on every kind of heresy. He combined zeal to rake over long-dead controversies, many of which, as Plummer observed, 'seem pale and colourless to us', with an often perfunctory broad-brush analysis of the doctrinal issues at stake in a manner which suggests that the roots of his obsession did not lie primarily in the specific

---

[46] The fragments quoted by Bede are all that remain. These works have been ascribed to Pelagius but are now restored to Julian: *CPL*, nos 751–2, 775c–d.

[47] Aldhelm, *De Virginitate prosa* (ed. S. Gwara, CCSL 124), 49; M. Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon library* (Oxford, 2006), 184, 324; M. Lapidge and M.W. Herren, *Aldhelm: the prose works* (Ipswich; Cambridge, 1979), 116 and 196, n. 26.

[48] *In Cantica Canticorum*, Prologue, lines 332–43, esp. 338–41: 'hoc illius [Hieronimi] opusculum non esse, quin potius ipse fidem eius vel magis perfidiam in dialogo Attici et Critoboli quem vivente Pelagio edidit cum adhuc Julianus ab eo puerulus quasi in caverna colubri nutriebatur regulus'.

[49] *CPL*, no. 737.

[50] Mayr-Harting, *Coming of Christianity*, 210. *Cf.* Holder, 'Hunting snakes', 107.

[51] A. Holder, 'The anti-Pelagian character of Bede's commentary on the Song of Songs', in *Biblical studies in the Early Middle Ages*, eds C. Leonardi and G. Orlandi (Florence, 2005), 91–103. *Cf.* 'Hunting snakes', 113–14.

nature and context of these disputes.[52] One important factor here may be that such discourse confirmed Bede in his role as a leading catholic teacher. It has been argued that 'probably most of his remarks on heresy were aimed at instruction and edification', that they formed in effect a teaching tool.[53] And certainly, in his commentary on Ezra, Bede, in his confident maturity put forward an argument, borrowed from Augustine, that heresies bear providential fruit in that the struggle against them elicits splendid treatises on Holy Scripture from the Church's teachers, among whom he undoubtedly classed himself.[54] That clearly provides a context for his discussion of the work of Julian of Eclanum in the prologue and elsewhere in his commentary on the Song of Songs. He was consciously lining himself up with Augustine, that *strenuissimus ... gratiae propugnator* with whom Julian had presumed to disagree.[55]

There is something in all these arguments but, like Holder,[56] I would argue that there are still more fundamental reasons for Bede's obsession. It is worth remembering that concern about heresy and accusations of heresy were still very much in the air in Britain in the early eighth century. Indeed, Bede had himself, famously, been the subject of just such an accusation, when still a young man of no more than thirty. That charge, that he had contravened orthodoxy by failing to place Christ's Incarnation at the beginning of the Sixth Age, rankled very deeply and had been repudiated in a most aggressive way in his letter to Plegwine, a work for public dissemination which openly attacks the household of his diocesan, Bishop Wilfrid.[57] Nevertheless, the mere fact that it was made points to a contemporary readiness to use such accusations as a means to smear opponents. And it should be noted that Bede in fact returned the charge, when he implicitly dismissed his accuser as a heretic for adhering to the view that each Age would last a thousand years and that the end of the present (Sixth) Age could therefore be predicted.[58]

---

[52] Plummer, *VBOH*, I, lxiii; Holder, 'Hunting snakes', 109; Carroll, *Venerable Bede*, 96.

[53] Carroll, *Venerable Bede*, 96.

[54] *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 3, lines 1526–30; A.T. Thacker, *Bede and Augustine of Hippo: history and figure in sacred text* (Jarrow Lecture, 2005). *Cf. In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 2124–75.

[55] *In Cantica Canticorum*, prologue, lines 12–16, 274–7.

[56] Holder, 'Hunting snakes', 108.

[57] *Epistola ad Pleguinam* (ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123C, 617–26). See: F. Wallis, *Bede: The reckoning of time*, revised 2nd edition (Liverpool, 2004), xxx–xxxi, 253–4, 405–15 and Wallis's contribution to this volume.

[58] *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, chapters 3–4; 14; 16–17.

In primam partem Samuhelis and the Period around 716

It is time now to look in detail at some of Bede's more revealing discussion of heresy as a pervasive, ever-present condition. Allusions to heresy are scattered through his entire *oeuvre*. His concern with the subject was already evident in an early commentary such as that on the seven Catholic Epistles,[59] which is studded with references to specific unorthodoxies, such as Pelagianism, Arianism and Manicheanism, as well as to heresy in general.[60] These preoccupations were developed and refined in Bede's later writings. The remainder of this paper will focus on his commentaries on the Old Testament, all of which date from his middle and final years. These generally pioneering works, often focused upon hitherto relatively unstudied biblical texts, allowed Bede more freedom to express his own views than did his writings on the much better known New Testament, where he was more inhibited by the weight of patristic tradition. The main focus will be on two works: the commentaries on the first book of Samuel and on Ezra and Nehemiah. *In primam partem Samuhelis* can be dated quite precisely, because of Bede's famous preface to the fourth book referring to the departure of his abbot, Ceolfrith, from Northumbria in 716;[61] it represents a seminal work of Bede's middle period in which he strongly develops and elaborates his views about teachers and preachers, and their role in defending the Church both from outside attack by pagans and from the internal treachery, the *perfidia*, of heretics and false brethren.[62] *In Ezram et Neemiam* is almost certainly a work of Bede's final years. As Scott DeGregorio has convincingly demonstrated, it is the work in which Bede expresses himself most fully on a growing preoccupation of his maturity, the need for reform within the Church as a whole but more specifically within the kingdom of Northumbria.[63] The tone here, however, is rather different; while there is a strong sense of bad teaching

[59] For the date see G.H. Brown, *A companion to Bede* (Woodbridge, 2009), 64–5; M.L.W. Laistner and H.H. King, *A hand-list of Bede manuscripts* (Ithaca, NY, 1943), 30–31.

[60] E.g. *In epistulas septem catholicas*, *In epistolam Iacobi*, 3, lines 45–51; *In epistolam II Petri*, 2, lines 2–5, 159–62; *In epistolam I Iohannis*, 1, lines 88–9, 131–4; 3, lines 11–19; 4, lines 8–14; 5, lines 329–31; *In epistolam III Iohannis*, lines 58–63; *In epistolam Judae*, lines 183–206.

[61] *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 1–28.

[62] A.T. Thacker, 'Bede and the ordering of understanding', in *Innovation and tradition in the writings of the Venerable Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Morgantown, WV, 2006), 37–63, at 54; *idem*, 'Bede, the Britons', esp. 134–44.

[63] S. DeGregorio, 'Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam* and the reform of the Northumbrian Church', *Speculum*, 79 (2004), 1–25.

and practice flourishing within the Church, the preoccupation with internal treachery, with *perfidia*, is much less pervasive.[64]

One particularly striking aspect of the earlier treatise, that on Samuel, is its preoccupation with reclaiming and reconciling penitent heretics. Bede distinguished grades among the heretical. In a long and important group of interrelated passages in Book 4, he contends that those who did not lose the love of unity could easily be received back into the Church by the Church's teachers (*doctores*) and might even become teachers themselves.[65] Even those left by heretic teachers in the black darkness of their sins, if they lack the strength to follow their masters in error, can be led back to the faith by catholic *doctores*.[66] Only convinced and obdurate heresiarchs should suffer God's perpetual vengeance.[67] Bede thought that the conversion of receptive heretics was a highly skilled job; not all those who had learned right belief had also learned how to reason with those who held beliefs contrary to the catholic faith. Even at the Council of Nicaea (325), where so many great *doctores* were gathered, it was difficult to find anyone except Athanasius, then a mere deacon of Alexandria, with the knowledge to take on Arius and defeat his devious subtleties.[68] Bede concluded that, to deal with heretics successfully, teachers had either to be strengthened by outstanding grace of faith or by being prepared through great skill in argument.[69] He continued this long sequence of passages with guidance on how the Church's teachers were to receive repentant heretics. The rule of the Church is, he says, that the *doctores* should inquire of them what they had been, what they understood concerning the faith, what they had in mind for the future. When they (the *doctores*) could recognise that penitents had the full intention of renouncing their heresies and favouring the catholic faith, then they (the *doctores*) were to admit them (the penitents) as suitable for reconciliation

---

[64] The word *perfidia* and its compounds occur over sixty times in the commentary on Samuel but only five times in that on Ezra.

[65] *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 2053–7: 'In hac lectione typice ostenditur seductos ab hereticis quamdiu dilectionem unitatis non perdiderint facile Christi gratia per doctores veritatis ad fidem posse recipi et sive doctores ipsos seu simpliciores quosque et propria salute contentos uno omnes eodemque vitae aeternae remunerandos esse denario'.

[66] *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 2179–84: 'Properantes catholici doctores ad certamen cum hereticis agendum inveniunt saepe relictos ab eis viros tenebrosa peccatorum suorum nigredine notabiles nec prae ingenii teneritudine magistros erroris ad ecclesiam vastandam sequi valentes adducuntque eos ad audiendam fidem catholicam panem aquamque verbi tribuunt'.

[67] *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 2058–9: '[In hac lectione ostenditur] ... ipsos heresiarchas partim corrigendos a domino, partim perpetua ultione plectendos [esse]'.

[68] *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 2148–60.

[69] *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 2167–9.

to the catholic sacraments. Such precautions were necessary lest everywhere they should appear to cast what is holy before dogs and pearls before swine.[70] Bede even sets out a kind of question and answer session:

> 'Whose hearer will you be?'[71] [the *doctor*] says. 'From where or to what sect do you now intend to come?'
>
> It is necessary that he who truly wishes to escape the snares of heretics shall answer:
>
> 'I confess that up to now I have been blinded by sin, delivered over to hearing heretics, but the master who infected me with error has abandoned me because when wars were made against the Church he perceived me to be less than suitable in speech or mind for such a struggle and moreover did not wish to lead me with him to such conflict, since we [the heretics] bursting forth from the south, that is from the light, putting forth our dogma as perfect and enlivened by the breath of the Holy Spirit, both led away not a few of the pagans to our sect and disturbed the faith itself of the Church by not a little'.[72]

Here Bede writes as if the reconciliation of penitent heretics was one of the prime duties of a catholic *doctor*. It is the duty of the learned teacher to guide ill-taught or weaker brethren back to true belief and properly constituted authority. Elsewhere, Bede writes, again in the present tense, of the many seduced by heretics who perceive the discord of their doctrines to have been overcome by catholic simplicity and return to be reconciled to the Church by the imposition

---

[70] For this passage see below, n. 72 and also Thacker, 'Bede, the Britons', 143.

[71] This translation is based upon emending the published text from 'auditores' to 'auditor es', to avoid the otherwise confusing move from a plural subject, implied by 'auditores' to a singular one, governing 'disponis': see the following footnote. I am grateful to Richard Sharpe for discussion of this passage.

[72] *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 2200–217. 'Regula est ecclesiae transfugientes ad se ab hereticis per doctores suos inquirere qui prius fuerint, quid de fide senserint, quo in futurum mente tendant, et cum eos tota intentione heresibus contradicere et catholicae fidei favere cognoverint tunc demum eis eiusdem fidei sacramenta reconciliandis adhibere ne sanctum canibus et porcis margaritas passim mittere videantur. Cuius, inquit, *auditor es* et de qua vel ad quam modo venire sectam disponis? Respondeat necesse est qui vere hereticorum laqueos evadere quaerit, Peccatis fateor obscuratus ego sum hactenus audiendis mancipatus hereticis, reliquit autem me magister qui erroribus imbuit quia ubi contra ecclesiam bella gerebantur minus me idoneum lingua vel ingenio ad hoc certamen esse perspexit neque ultra ad talem voluit secum ducere conflictum, siquidem nos erumpentes ab austro, id est luce, perfectum et spiritus sancti flatu vivificum dogma nostrum promittentes et gentilium non paucos ad nostram abduximus sectam et ipsam ecclesiae fidem non parva ex parte turbavimus'.

of episcopal hands.[73] All this seems prescriptive and practical, applicable to actual contemporary events. Despite the catechetical nature of the text, however, it is clear that Bede was not thinking of a specific set of doctrines. Rather he seems to be constructing an imaginary debate about the penitent heretic's state of mind. It is wilful discord and obdurate deviation from prescribed catholic norms that primarily concern him. Above all, this needs to be set in the context of Bede's emphasis on the need to reclaim those who found themselves separated from catholic authority and on his censure, spelt out in the later commentary on Ezra, of those who denied the validity of such ministrations, claiming that those who lapsed, even if they repented of error, could not be reunited with the Church. Such rigorists, Bede claimed, were themselves guilty of heresy.[74] There were issues here, one suspects, that may well have been hotly debated in the Northumbrian Church of his day. Bede, then, is primarily concerned with heresy as a set of attitudes and as a condition – a state of separation from catholic unity – and with how to combat this, rather than with a specific set of doctrines. It is clear that the reconciliation of those who had visited disharmony on the catholic community had an immediate resonance in his mind, that it was imbued with contemporary relevance.

Some hint of the specific circumstances which may have lain behind Bede's comments is provided by another highly significant passage, at the beginning of the fourth book of *In primam partem Samuhelis*: Bede's exposition of David's flight from Saul, when he left Keilah after rescuing it from the Philistines, and wandered from place to place.[75] Here, Bede interprets David as prefiguring Christ, the Word of God, wandering hither and thither uncertain in what city or on whose breast he should find rest. This figure, he observes, could refer generally to any age of the Church, which never lacks false brethren, but in fact it refers particularly to the most recent times, *ad novissima tempora*, in which they abound more amply. False brethren are characterised by the *levitas* and *perfidia* of the men of Keilah, who were prepared to surrender their saviour David to his

[73] *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 2, lines 2113–18: 'Multi namque seducti ab hereticis impugnantesque cum eis ecclesiam, ubi dissonantiam dogmatis eorum cognovere et catholica simplicitate … transcendi atque exsuperari viderunt, reversi sunt ut impositione manus sacerdotalis catholicae reconciliarentur ecclesiae'.

[74] *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 3, lines 683–4: 'Sunt inter hereticos qui etiam paenitentibus post lapsum dari veniam negant'.

[75] 1 Samuel 23.13.

enemy Saul.[76] Bede goes on to link them with the present-day heirs of Judas and with those who separate themselves from catholic unity.[77]

That passage follows very shortly after the famous personal preface to Book 4, in which Bede tells of his anguish of mind at recent events in his own monastery.[78] Described as 'a new change of circumstances' (*nova circumstantium rerum mutatio*), they culminated in the sudden disturbance (*improvisa conturbatio*) of the (perhaps enforced) departure of his elderly abbot Ceolfrith, apparently in the wake of the deposition of the Northumbrian king Osred. Bede's disgust for the perfidious men of Keilah who collaborated with the enemy of their saviour David sprang perhaps from his perception of the very contemporary discords within his own community over the activities of their abbot and the change of regime. Bede, in other words, saw himself as observing at very close quarters behaviour and attitudes appropriate to heretics, ready to betray the community of the faithful from within. The distinctive emphasis on treachery and its linkage with heresy gives the impression that Bede had a very specific group of contemporaries in his sights.[79]

Alongside *In primam partem Samuhelis* may be set Bede's commentaries on the Song of Songs and Proverbs. *In Cantica Canticorum* shares a number of themes and preoccupations with the commentary on Samuel. Both, for example, are much concerned with the role of teachers and preachers in defending the Church against the deceit and trickery of heretics; both link heretics with bad catholics and schismatics; and both treat them as currently active and pervasive.[80] More specifically, as Arthur Holder has shown, *In primam partem Samuhelis*

---

[76] *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 171–81: 'Vae autem animae illi, vae civitati quam sermo Dei relinquens huc illucque vagatur incertus ubi cuiusve pectore sedem requiemque capessat … Sane notandum quod haec generaliter ad omne tempus ecclesiae cui numquam falsi fratres desunt sed specialiter ad novissima tempora quibus amplius abundabant possunt typice referri quorum levitati ac perfidiae ipsum etiam nomen Ceilae convenit'.

[77] Bede proceeds to a discussion of the figural meaning of the name Keilah, basing his interpretation on a direct quotation from Jerome – '[Ceila] ad fundam iacta sive suscitans eam aut tollens sibimet' – and applying it to the erring and unstable soul of the false Christian: *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 181–92; Jerome, *Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominum* (ed. P. de Lagarde, CCSL 72, 59–161), 92, lines 6–7.

[78] *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 1–28.

[79] Thacker, 'Bede, the Britons', 134–47. In that paper, I suggested that this distinctive terminology was connected primarily with Bede's fear and loathing of the Britons. I would now add that Bede probably also had in mind problems more internal, more immediately at home, in much of his discourse on heretics and, in particular, false brethren.

[80] For teachers and preachers as guardians against heresy see e.g. *In Cantica Canticorum*, 2.3.7, lines 296–7; 2.3.8, lines 336–8; 3.5.7, lines 400–412; 4.7.4, lines 293–311. For *In primam partem Samuhelis* see Thacker, 'Bede, the Britons'.

offers the same exegesis of a couple of passages from the Song of Songs expounded at greater length in Bede's commentary on the latter book.[81] And as Calvin Kendall argues in this volume, Bede displays a similar awareness of the Saracen threat in both works. It seems likely therefore that they were written about the same time.[82] The commentary on Proverbs cannot be securely dated. But, although Bede's analysis is rather less developed in this work, it shows a notable preoccupation with the deceits of heretics, whom, as in the commentaries on 1 Samuel and the Song of Songs, it associates with schismatics and false brethren.[83] And again like the other two commentaries it is also strongly concerned with the role of *doctores* and *praedicatores* in defending the Church against the wiles of deceitful heretics.[84] While neither *In Cantica Canticorum* nor *In prouerbia Salomonis* places such a strong and personal emphasis on treachery, *perfidia*, and on false brethren, or conveys quite such a pervasive sense of the enemy within, they, like *In primam partem Samuhelis*, provide some indication of the nature of Bede's concerns in the period around 716.

In Ezram et Neemiam and the Period around 730

This essay concludes with analysis of Bede's commentary on Ezra, like that on Samuel a work notable for its unusually personal tone and for its pointed references to the present.[85] Arguably the last of Bede's biblical commentaries, it concludes, like the *Historia ecclesiastica*, with an eloquent prayer for the author's salvation which shows Bede conscious of discovering new meanings and significance beneath the veil of the old. The figure of Ezra has been much discussed of late and I do not propose to go into that here. Suffice it say that Ezra, the priest and swift scribe, was a figure with whom Bede seems to have

---

[81] A. Holder, *The Venerable Bede: On the Song of Songs and selected writings* (Mahwah, NJ, 2011), 27–8; *idem*, 'Anti-Pelagian character'.

[82] Holder regards the fact that the two passages from the Song of Songs (4.9 and 8.1) are commented on briefly by Bede in *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 1256–64, and at much greater length but with similar sense in *In Cantica Canticorum*, 3.4.9, lines 476–82; 5.8.1, lines 1–20, as evidence of the anteriority of the latter: 'Anti-Pelagian character', 98–100. I am not entirely persuaded by this, but the connection between the two works is clear.

[83] E.g. *In prouerbia Salomonis*, 1.5, lines 26–34; 1.7, lines 73–7; 2.24, lines 27–30; 3.28, lines 30–34; 3.31, lines 358–60.

[84] E.g. *In prouerbia Salomonis*, 2.10, lines 106–11 (likening them to parts of the body – eyes and teeth – as in the commentary on the Song of Songs: 2.4, lines 84–9; 3.4, lines 261–70; 3.4, lines 486–500, *etc.*); *In prouerbia Salomonis*, 3.30, lines 128–39; 3.31, lines 126–8.

[85] S. DeGregorio, *Bede: On Ezra and Nehemiah* (Liverpool, 2006), xxx–xxxvi.

especially identified, whom he viewed in especially exalted terms and offered as a prototype for the new archiepiscopal authority which was clearly being planned for Northumbria in the earlier 730s, the last years of his life.[86]

In Ezram et Neemiam develops themes which are already apparent in *In primam partem Samuhelis* and other Old Testament commentaries of Bede's middle period, but apparently with a rather different set of contemporary circumstances in mind. The storyline is clear. There are false pastors and teachers within the present Church, but, God willing, a reformed body under divinely inspired leaders will fend off heresy, spread the true faith and bring each individual soul well-prepared to Judgement. The crucial role of teachers and preachers who build up and restore the Church, receiving penitents and guiding the faithful to their ultimate goal, is much, indeed obsessively, discussed. This brings with it the concomitant requirement – the need to ensure that such figures are worthy of their high calling to reform and that they replace those who are not. Thus at an early point in the work Bede presents returning Israel's exclusion of those who could not prove their priestly descent as a prefiguring of the removal from office of unworthy or heretical ministers of the altar. They could, he says, if they repented, hope for salvation, but they could not regain their status as priests or teachers and preachers. As in the treatment of the treacherous brethren in the commentary on Samuel (where reconciliation of the penitent was again on offer), this passage gives the impression that Bede had in mind a practical course of action for some very specific contemporary situations and individuals.[87]

While such themes clearly have universal significance, their more focused – even Northumbrian – application is evident in many places. Above all, there are pointed references to the need for institutional reform of today's false monasteries and corrupt and avaricious pastors, to which Scott DeGregorio has drawn attention as evoking Bede's letter to Ecgberht.[88] These jeremiads

[86] E.g. J. O'Reilly, 'The library of Scripture: views from Vivarium and Wearmouth-Jarrow', in *New offerings, ancient treasures: studies in medieval art for George Henderson*, eds P. Binski and W. Noel (Stroud, 2001), 3–39, esp. 18–30; DeGregorio, *On Ezra and Nehemiah*, xxxiii–xxxvi.

[87] *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 1, lines 603–21, esp. lines 611–18: 'Iuxta sensum vero mysticum quaerunt filii sacerdotum de captivitate Babilonia ascendentes scripturam genealogiae suae et non invenientes de sacerdotio eiciuntur cum ipsi altaris ministri tanta in scelera tamve infanda dogmata decidunt ut etsi paenitendo ad salutem animae redeant non tamen digni fieri possint qui ad sacrum quem perdidere gradum promoveantur ac docendi in evangelio sive sacramenta conficiendi officium repentant'.

[88] E.g. *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 1, lines 1394–471; 2, lines 595–632; S. DeGregorio, 'Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam*: a document in Church reform?' in *Bède le Vénérable entre tradition et postérité*, eds S. Lebecq, M. Perrin and O. Szerwiniack (Lille, 2005), 97–107; *idem*, 'Reform of the Northumbrian Church'; and see also DeGregorio's essay in Chapter 9 of this volume.

culminate near the end of the work in a vituperative condemnation of the cupidity of those who currently appear in the religious habit yet demand vast secular reward while offering no teaching or example of godly living. Such abuses Bede regards as an everyday event in contemporary Northumbria.[89] Ezra provides so to speak a blueprint for a programme of action addressed to the Northumbrian elite of the day. In the light of the events of the early 730s, the commentary's twin themes of the crucial importance of pontifical (equated with archiepiscopal) authority and the need to exclude unworthy pastors acquire a remarkably prophetic prescience. At the very least, they suggest that Bede was pondering the role of the northern see and perhaps its elevation to metropolitan status. They may even indeed prompt the suspicion that he was involved in the events that led up to the emergence of the northern province. It seems at least possible that the author of the Ezra commentary had a hand in the removal of Wilfrid II and his replacement by Bishop Ecgberht in 732, and in Ecgberht's achievement of archiepiscopal rank in 735, the year that Bede himself died.[90] Bede's letter to Ecgberht, written late in 734, clearly suggests that by then he was well aware of these plans.[91]

Such activities, however, were deeply divisive, politically and ecclesiastically. Wilfrid II seems to have accepted his removal, but it is clear that the train of events which resulted in Ecgberht's elevation to York in 732 and his brother Eadberht's eventual accession to the Northumbrian throne in 737 was a turbulent one. In 731 King Ceolwulf, the dedicatee of the *Historia ecclesiastica*, was temporarily deposed and tonsured, and Bede's own diocesan, Acca of Hexham, was driven from his see never to return. Although reinstated, Ceolwulf was to make way for Eadberht six years later, when once again he was sent into a monastery.[92] During this period, Stephen's *Vita Wilfridi* seems to have been reissued, amended to describe the exiled Acca as 'of blessed memory', an action which may reflect the fears of Wilfrid's former monastic confederation that with Acca's expulsion its own position was under attack.[93]

Bede's own feelings about these events are very difficult to ascertain. In particular, we would like to know more about the departure of Acca. Was he

---

[89] *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 3, lines 825–33.

[90] J. Story, 'Bede, Willibrord and the letters of Pope Honorius I on the genesis of the Archbishopric of York', *English Historical Review*, 127 (2012), 783–818; A.T. Thacker, 'Wilfrid, his cult and his biographer', in *Wilfrid: abbot, bishop, saint*, ed. Higham, 1–16, at 14–16.

[91] *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* (ed. C. Plummer, *VBOH*, I, 405–23); see esp. Chapter 9.

[92] *Continuatio Bedae* (ed. Colgrave and Mynors, *BEH*, 572–7), *s.a.* 737.

[93] C. Stancliffe, 'Dating Wilfrid's death and Stephen's *Life*', in *Wilfrid: abbot, bishop, saint*, ed. Higham, 17–26, at 24–5.

exiled because he aspired to his mentor Wilfrid I's former see? And if so, did Bede himself perhaps support this? Dealing with Ecgberht may perhaps have been a *pis aller*, and the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* may reflect Bede's anxiety that the bishop did not have the right stuff in him rather than the confident instruction of a mentor to a willing pupil. On the other hand, Acca was the heir of Wilfrid whose ecclesial views Bede deeply disliked; so whatever his personal feelings, he may have been ambivalent about Acca's role within the Church of his day.

What, however, is much more certain is that Bede really did have fears about the integrity of the Northumbrian Church. The tone of one of the more important passages on heresy in the commentary on Ezra, that on Ezra Chapter 4, which forms the conclusion to Book 1, is significant here.[94] Bede is discussing the rebuilding of the Temple by the Israelites on their return from the Babylonian captivity – a potent figure, of course, for the reform of the Church. The Israelites receive an offer of help in the work from those who had supplanted them in their homeland during their exile, (wrongly) identified by Bede as the Samaritans. The latter, who had accepted God's Law but remained slaves to their former idols, stand, says Bede, for the false brethren, that is for heretics and bad catholics. Elsewhere said to be eager to worship with the faithful and to be believed genuine members of the catholic Church,[95] they in fact seek to separate those who listen to them from the orthodox community. Heretics pretend that they share authority to teach with the catholics; that was the line taken, for example, by Arius and Pelagius.[96] How often, says Bede, have heretics, not just in individual cities (*civitates*) but in entire regions (*provinciae*), hindered true confession by wrongful instruction or by violent threats. Bede goes on to list some of those so hindered: Athanasius, Ambrose, Hilary, Eusebius, the bishops of Africa. Besieged, banished or martyred, they were unable to save the house of God, which they had built, from profanation by men seeking their own ends, until opportunity was found by catholic Fathers to restore the Church after heresies had been detected and overcome. Here once again, Bede is focused on heretics as the enemy within, who pose as catholic pastors to lead the faithful astray.[97]

In a highly suggestive passage, Bede goes on to analyse the verse recounting the hiring of counsellors by the peoples of the land – figures of the false brethren – to ensure that the royal power of Persia was engaged against the builders of the Temple (Ezra 4.5). The allegorical meaning, he says, is quite plain: heretics assail the Church whenever the opportunity is favourable. At times they attack

[94] *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 1, lines 1596–850.
[95] *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 3, lines 900–927.
[96] *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 1, lines 1616–31.
[97] *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 1, lines 1670–86.

through wicked teachings, at others through the sword and others through the support of *gentilium principes* – heathen (i.e. earthly) rulers. In particular, they seek protection from earthly rulers (*principes terreni*) against the Church.[98] The emphasis on seeking access to royal authority is interesting. Bede, who dedicated his *Historia ecclesiastica* to a king, understood how much royal authority mattered. It would play a highly important part in the restoration of the Archbishopric of York.

Elsewhere in the commentary Bede makes plain his attitude to those whom he brands as the heretics of his own time. Taking the Samaritans once again as their prefigurement, he says that certain Christians of today are just like heretics. They take their stomach as a god; they pursue greed, which the apostle Paul called slavery to idols; they serve created things more than the creator. Like heretics, they do not want the walls of the Church restored (i.e. the Church reformed) in case they are forced to retreat from their own impiety.[99] At the very end of the commentary, he demands their exclusion. What fellowship, he asks, do heretics and schismatics have with the orthodox and peace-loving children of God? They should be anathematised by catholic teachers and expelled from the Church.[100]

Conclusions

All this suggests very powerfully that while Bede understood perfectly well the relative distinctions made by Church Fathers such as Augustine between heresy, false brethren, schismatics and bad catholics, he deliberately linked them as closely as possible in order to load his rhetoric against his ecclesiastical opponents. All were viewed as exhibiting enduring attitudes of mind which presented as much a threat in the present as in the past. The mindset which had produced the errors of Eutyches or Pelagius had not perished with the catholic refutation of their teaching; it endured and could resurface at any time to threaten the Church whether in denying Christ's two wills in papal Rome or the proper calculation of Easter in *Britannia*. Obduracy in error, deceit and discord was endemic. In Bede's mind heresy had been redefined to encompass a wide variety of false teaching and practice which was both current in his day and had major implications for the future.

---

98 *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 1, lines 1687–714.

99 *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 3, lines 664–83.

100 *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 3, lines 1901–82. For the role of the learned *doctor* see e.g. 3, lines 758–66.

Bede then was living in a world in which heresy still mattered. Accusations of heresy were made; ecclesiastical opponents could be excommunicated. For Bede, 'heresy' was code for a whole spectrum of contemporary problems, of which deviant doctrine seems to be only one (sometimes rather minor) manifestation; above all it was attitude of mind towards catholic truth and unity which was the main issue. In the present as in the past – as the continuing obdurate persistence in the wrongful calculation of Easter demonstrated – ancient habits of thought could re-emerge to infect the contemporary Church. Bede saw himself as one of the elite *doctores* charged with identifying such error and with bringing its exponents back to the catholic fold. His very identity as a teacher and scholar was bound up with keeping watch for heresy and bad practice.[101] A leading member of one of the richest and grandest institutions in the England of his day, he was inevitably involved in the controversies which rent the Northumbrian Church in the early eighth century. In two of his most important and personal works, the commentaries on Samuel and Ezra, he revealed, albeit obliquely, his engagement with contemporary issues and controversies. In the commentary on Samuel, although concern with good teaching and pastoral care is very evident, it seems to have been disputes within his own monastery and the *perfidia* which characterised them that affected him most deeply. In the commentary on Ezra, it seems to have been the factions which formed around the recreation of the Archbishopric of York and the ecclesiastical changes Bede hoped this would spearhead that involved him most of all. The deliberately interrelated concepts of heresy and schism and of false brethren and bad catholics provided him with an effective framework for condemning those of whom he disapproved in the present and whose fate in the future he wished to determine.

[101] *Cf. In Ezram et Neemiam*, 3, lines 758–66.

Chapter 3

Separation Anxiety: Bede and Threats to Wearmouth and Jarrow[1]

Christopher Grocock

On the face of it, the survival and integrity of Wearmouth-Jarrow would seem to be the least of Bede's worries about the future. None of his writings comment directly, and few even obliquely, on internal tensions within the monastery. Moreover, Bede's histories and homilies represent the foundation of first St Peter's Wearmouth (*c.* 673), and then St Paul's Jarrow (*c.* 681/2), as unfolding without controversy. Its relations with its secular and ecclesiastical neighbours are innocent of complication. Most importantly, the union of the two houses under a single abbatial administration is depicted as an arrangement that was planned from the outset; an essential feature of the monastery's identity. The aim of this essay is to bring to the fore some hitherto overlooked elements in Bede's *Historia abbatum* (written in late 716 or shortly thereafter) which suggest that this identity was anything but secure in the past, and that Bede and his brothers were justifiably concerned that it could be undermined in the future. The *Historia abbatum* consequently looks less like a devout memoir, and more like a carefully crafted history of Wearmouth-Jarrow itself, as Bede wished to see it. Comparison with the anonymous and virtually contemporary *Vita Ceolfridi* and Bede's own *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* (5 November 734) brings Bede's anxieties and his strategies into sharper focus.

In the speeches in the *Historia abbatum* attributed to Benedict Biscop as he faced his impending death in the three years leading up to 689 we find fears expressed regarding potential threats to the immediate future of the monastery which seem on the one hand to belong to the context in which they are set, and which on the other hand are similar to the anxieties expressed by Ceolfrith in his

[1] A first version of this paper was given at the Leeds International Medieval Congress of 2012; for its current structure and argument, the author is greatly indebted to Peter Darby and to Faith Wallis for assistance and suggestions above and beyond the call of duty and to Ian Wood for helpful comments; any remaining faults or errors remain those of the writer.

farewell discourses of 716 in both the *Historia abbatum* and in the anonymous *Vita Ceolfridi*. What are we to make of these fears about the future of Wearmouth-Jarrow, and of the state of monastic Christianity in Northumbria? We may wonder whether Bede is reading his own worries on to the past, or whether such concerns are in fact expressions of a more long-standing issue about the status of the 'twin monastery' of which both Bede and the anonymous author of the *Vita Ceolfridi* speak. The issue is also connected to the ways in which the two foundations of Wearmouth and Jarrow were set up, and their relations to one another. While Bede's aim in writing the *Historia abbatum* may have been to present a past 'golden age', much as he did in the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, the status and even survival of the monastery as Bede knew it may have been under threat more or less consistently throughout his lifetime, at least in the consciousness of the monks. Some recent interpretations of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* regard it as being composed primarily to meet the needs of Bede's audience at the time of composition, and less as an accurate reflection of the events which it narrates.[2] This essay will demonstrate that the same is also true of some sections of the *Historia abbatum*, a text in which Bede is not just speaking to the condition of his contemporaries, but in which he is also opening a window onto a persistent anxiety about the future of Wearmouth-Jarrow.

Major concerns for the future of his monastic foundation are expressed in the 'farewell discourse' speech put into the mouth of Benedict Biscop by Bede in *Historia abbatum* 11. It is the purpose of this essay to place these concerns for the future both in their original and later contexts, and to provide a comparison between the content (and context) of that speech with other evidence about the anxieties which were uppermost in the minds of the leaders of Wearmouth-Jarrow in its formative years, particularly the two contemporaneous accounts of the departure of Ceolfrith in the summer months of 716.[3] The rhetorical flourishes that Bede uses to highlight key points will also be examined briefly, to see where Bede places stylistic emphases, perhaps more obvious to his fellow monks that to us. Some similarities in the issues raised in *Historia abbatum* 11 and the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* will also be examined, as the latter text shows Bede's thinking as he himself was able to look back over what had been a turbulent period of Northumbrian history and seems to have felt freer to express

[2] See in particular: N.J. Higham, *(Re–)reading Bede: the Ecclesiastical History in context* (London, 2006); V. Gunn, *Bede's Historiae: genre, rhetoric and the construction of Anglo-Saxon Church History* (Woodbridge, 2009).

[3] Bede, *Historia abbatum*, 16–18; Anonymous, *Vita Ceolfridi*, 21–7. Latin text and English translations for the *Historia abbatum*, anonymous *Vita Ceolfridi* and Bede's *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* are taken from C.W. Grocock and I.N. Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow* (Oxford, 2013).

his hopes, fears and vision for the future of his monastery more directly than in any of his explicitly historical writings.

Consideration of all this may help us to assess the extent to which Bede is reporting authentic tradition about Benedict Biscop's and Ceolfrith's final words in the *Historia abbatum*, or expressing contemporary personal or community anxiety; it may also help us to understand better in a broader context what Bede is trying to achieve when he depicts events in history, and how much clarity (or otherwise) is produced by his use of rhetorical devices.[4] The question which a close study of the wording of the text and the historical contexts might help to clarify is whether, in the case of *Historia abbatum* 11, Bede was using an event from the fairly distant past (686–689) to emphasise an issue which was current at the time of writing (716), or whether it might be a historical record as well. It may be that the two houses were not fully amalgamated until Benedict's death in 703; indeed, separate papal privileges seem to have been granted to secure the status of Wearmouth and Jarrow, the first made by Pope Agatho in *c.* 679–680, the second by Pope Sergius in *c.* 701.[5] The former can have been applicable only to Wearmouth, given that it was granted by Agatho a year or two before the foundation of Jarrow in *c.* 681–682.[6] If Wearmouth-Jarrow was not set up as a single institution then it may have been less secure from outside interference than is sometimes assumed; the prospect of its territories being reassigned to other foundations set up for other purposes might well have been a source of real anxiety for both the Wearmouth and Jarrow communities.

In addition, there is another issue which might have a bearing on the political and ecclesiastical or monastic situation in precisely these same years, which may be summed up in the one name: Wilfrid (d. 710). As bishop of a massive diocese which encompassed most of northern Britain, at least in theory, prior to 678, Wilfrid had made strenuous efforts to recover his control of this vast area in Rome in 679 (Bede reports that as a result of his appeal, it was formally recorded in the acts of the papal synod that Wilfrid had 'confessed the true and catholic faith on behalf of the whole northern part of Britain and Ireland, together with the islands inhabited by the English and British races, as well as the Irish and

---

[4] On Bede's use of rhetoric see: R. Ray, *Bede, rhetoric, and the creation of Christian Latin culture* (Jarrow Lecture, 1997); Gunn, *Bede's Historiae*, 13–17.

[5] *Historia abbatum*, 6 (letter of privilege from Pope Agatho obtained by Benedict); 15 (letter of privilege from Sergius obtained by Ceolfrith).

[6] I.N. Wood, *The origins of Jarrow; the monastery, the slake and Ecgfrith's minster*, Bede's World Studies 1 (Jarrow, 2008), 16–18.

Picts, and has confirmed it with his signature');[7] he had returned to Sussex, 681–687;[8] he was reconciled to the Northumbrian royal house (now under new management) in 687; he had not received the areas overseen by Lindisfarne or Hexham back, but by 688 only had authority over a reduced part of the diocese of York and the distant northern bishopric of Abercorn, ministering to the Picts.[9] Was it coincidence, or did Benedict Biscop feel a certain amount of unease about the Aldfrith–Wilfrid parleys which led to this result in precisely the three years when he became progressively less able to participate? Did Wilfrid even expect to have some control over monasteries like Wearmouth-Jarrow, or perhaps to receive some entitlement to income from them? This might have been a 'live' issue in the years 686–689, the last years of Benedict Biscop's life, but not later; it may provide further justification for thinking that 'the fears for the future' expressed in *Historia abbatum* 11 had some grounding in the context which they provide, and are not only a reflection of later anxieties. It is to those fears that we may now turn.

Benedict Biscop's Farewell Discourse (*Historia abbatum* 11)

The text of *Historia abbatum* 11 may be divided into sub-sections, as follows:

Context

> Et Benedictus per triennium languore paulatim accrescente tanta paralisi dissolutus est, ut ab omni prorsus inferiorum membrorum factus sit parte

[7] Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica* (eds B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors, *BEH*), 5.19: '... pro omni aquilonali parte Brittaniae et Hiberniae, insulis quae ab Anglorum et Brettonum necnon Scottorum et Pictorum gentibus incoluntur, ueram et catholicam fidem confessus est, et cum subscriptione sua corroborauit'.

[8] This stage of Wilfrid's career is examined by: H. Mayr-Harting, 'St Wilfrid in Sussex', in *Studies in Sussex church history*, ed. M.J. Kitch (London, 1981), 1–17.

[9] A broad outline of Wilfrid's career is given by Bede in *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.19, but a much fuller account is given in Stephen of Ripon's partisan *Vita Wilfridi* (ed. B. Colgrave, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*). See further: D.H. Farmer, 'Saint Wilfrid', in *Saint Wilfrid at Hexham*, ed. D.P. Kirby (Newcastle upon Tyne, 1974), 35–60; W. Goffart, *The narrators of barbarian history (AD 550–800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton, NJ, 1988), 235–328; D.A.E. Pelteret, 'Saint Wilfrid: tribal bishop, civic bishop or Germanic lord?' in *The community, the family and the saint: patterns of power in Early Medieval Europe*, eds J. Hill and M. Swan (Turnhout, 1998), 159–80.

> praemortuus, superioribus solum, sine quorum uita uiuere nequit homo, ad officium patientiae uirtutemque reseruatis.
>
> And Benedict gradually grew weaker over three years, being stricken with such paralysis that he lost the use of every part of his lower limbs, and could only control his upper limbs, without which a man cannot stay alive, to carry out his duties of patience and courage.

Bede sets the scene for Benedict Biscop's death with some dramatic description, evoking particular pathos by stressing the gradual decline and emphasising that it took place 'over three years'. This provides the context for the farewell speech which follows. A closer examination of how these points are emphasised rhetorically helps to clarify Bede's interests. Here are the same Latin texts, with some of the key words and phrases printed in italic, to illustrate the importance of their choice and position:

> et Benedictus *per triennium* *languore paulatim accrescente*
> tanta paralisi dissolutus est,
> ut ab *omni* prorsus inferiorum membrorum factus sit *parte* praemortuus,
> *superioribus solum*, sine quorum uita uiuere nequit homo,
> ad officium patientiae uirtutemque *reseruatis*.

Apart from the meaning of the words, we should note the descriptive ablative phrase *languore paulatim accrescente* which 'piles on the agony' following *per triennium*. We should also note a 'tic' of Bede to which his hearers must have become accustomed: the suspending of the resolution of phrases, found more often in poetry than prose; he introduces a phrase with one word (most often an adjective, but the second example here is an adjective acting as a substantive) and then introduces other clauses qualifying the meaning or providing extra information, before he completes the sense. The reader (or listener) is made to wait for the whole phrase to be completed and the sense to 'slot into place'. Here, the phrases are *omni* ... *parte* and *superioribus* ... *reseruatis.* This device makes the listener or reader pay close attention, and perhaps stretching the construction of the sentence out in this way also mirrors the three long years of Benedict Biscop's decline.

Having thus set the scene, Bede moves on to outline the abbot's concerns, which can be sub-divided into three parts: keeping the Rule; keeping the library; keeping control of the monastery in the monastic family.

Keeping the Rule

> Agebat Benedictus aduenientes sepius ad se fratres de custodienda, quam statuerat, regula firmare: 'Neque enim putare habetis', inquit, 'quod ex meo haec quae uobis statui decreta indoctus corde protulerim. Ex decem quippe et septem monasteriis quae inter longos meae crebre peregrinationis discursus optima comperi, haec uniuersa didici, et uobis salubriter obseruanda contradidi'.
>
> Benedict used to encourage the brothers, who quite often visited him, discussing the keeping of the rule which he had set up: 'You should not think', he said, 'that I have set forth the decrees which I have laid down for you from my heart without learning. You see, I have taught you all the best things I have found from seventeen monasteries during the long absences of my frequent pilgrimages, and passed them on to you to be observed for your good'.

This was not a discourse uttered on but one occasion, as is borne out by the use of *sepius* in the Latin; it was constantly a source of anxiety about the future of the monastery over the three years of Benedict's decline.[10] As composed by Bede, it reflects the 'farewell discourse' of Christ in the upper room to the disciples (John 13–17). Bede sums up everything Benedict had sought to achieve, and which he kept on saying, in various guises, over quite a period of time. The use of the comparative allows two appropriate nuanced meanings here: either indicating that the brothers did not just visit often but fairly often or rather often; or alternatively that the brothers visited more often than had been their custom before their abbot was ill. Either way, the urgency of their visits is stressed.

Then comes the first of the urgings, which I have subtitled 'keeping the Rule': the main point here is not the antiquarian interest about how many places Benedict Biscop had visited in his remarkable travels or what he had gathered from where (despite the fact that the modern historian of the period might find them by far the most stimulating questions to ask); for Benedict Biscop's (or Bede's) audience, whatever the 'decrees' contained, the main point is that 'they have been passed on to you to be observed for your good'. They constitute the right way of living for the community, which is shown to be genuine.[11]

---

[10] *Sepius* is rendered as 'so often' by D.H. Farmer in *The Age of Bede* (Harmondsworth, 1998), 198. See J.F. Kennedy, *Revised Latin Primer* (London, 1962), §٣٠٩.

[11] On the rule followed at Wearmouth-Jarrow, see: A.G.P. Van der Walt, 'Reflections on the Benedictine Rule in Bede's Homiliary', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 37 (1968), 367–76.

In this section of the speech proper, something interesting is going on at the start. Bede's word-order is odd, but emphatic – the first words and last ones in a sentence so often carry more stress as a result of their placing, and Bede is such an artist that he does not place them by accident:

> *Agebat* Benedictus aduenientes sepius ad se fratres
> *de custodienda,* quam statuerat,
> *regula firmare:*
>
> 'Neque enim putare habetis,' inquit,
> 'quod *ex meo* *haec* quae uobis statui *decreta* indoctus *corde* protulerim.
>
> Ex decem quippe et septem monasteriis
> *quae* inter longos meae crebre peregrinationis discursus *optima* comperi,
> *haec uniuersa* didici,
> et uobis salubriter *obseruanda* contradidi'.

Agebat and *firmare* are 'bookends' to the introductory phrase;[12] the imperfect tense may indicate that he 'kept on' doing it, or even that with the advent of his illness, he began the process. The key point Bede wishes to get across is that Benedict Biscop had a major concern for the future of his monastery laid on his heart, and his aim was to make sure his views were firmly held by those who would outlive him (*firmare*). In the second sentence there is another example of the extreme separation of *ex meo* and *corde*: everything Benedict has learned is located in between, and is visually in his heart, in the text. It is a tour-de-force of disjointed word-order: it might also (though very subjectively) be interpreted as conveying the breathlessness of the elderly invalid!

This section highlights the importance of keeping fast to the lessons that Benedict has taught and the Rule he has set out. For good measure it is also rounded off with an ascending tricolon, a series of three balancing clauses, the third phrase being longer and acting as a culmination to the points being made (rather like a punch-line):

---

[12] Lewis and Short define *agebat* in the following terms: 'to pursue in one's mind; to drive at; to be occupied with; to have in view, to aim at'; or alternatively: to 'discuss, plead, deliberate'. C.T. Lewis and C. Short, *A Latin dictionary* (Oxford, 1879), 75, II. D 3, 8.

> *quae … optima* comperi,
> *haec uniuersa* didici,
> et uobis salubriter *obseruanda* contradidi

We may also note that there is also some powerful use made in these passages of clausulae, which are metrical patterns of long and short syllables which feature in 'artistic prose' or *Kunstprosa*, and of cursus, selected patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables at the end of phrases or sentences, based entirely on word-accent, which would have given assistance to a monastic reader and which also provide key emphases within the text.[13]

Keeping the Library

> *Bibliothecam quam de Roma nobilissimam copiosissimamque* aduexerat ad *instructionem ecclesiae necessariam*, sollicite seruari *integram* ne[14] per incuriam fedari aut passim dissipari praecepit.
>
> He directed that the very splendid and well-stocked library he had brought from Rome, and which was needed for the teaching of the church, should carefully be preserved intact and not spoiled through lack of attention or divided up all over the place.

This second point highlights the importance of the collection of books which had been gathered into the monastery's library, that it: 'should carefully be preserved intact and not spoiled through lack of attention or divided up all over the place'.[15]

---

[13] Detailed treatment of these is beyond the scope of this paper; see instead: Grocock and Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, lxxxvii–xcv; C.W. Grocock, 'Bede and the golden age of Latin prose in Northumbria', in *Northumbria's golden age*, eds J. Hawkes and S. Mills (Stroud, 1999), 371–82. On clausulae, see the very detailed treatment by G. Orlandi, 'Metrical and rhythmical clausulae in Medieval Latin prose: some aspects and problems', in *Aspects of the language of Latin prose*, eds T. Reinhardt, M. Lapidge and J. Adams (Oxford, 2005), 395–412.

[14] All of the manuscripts of the *Historia abbatum* read *ne* followed by the sequence of plain infinitives. Some such verb as *paterentur* or *permitterent* is required to complete the sense. Plummer (*VBOH*, I, 375) printed *nec*, but the ellipsis is not impossible.

[15] On the Wearmouth-Jarrow library, see: M. Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon library* (Oxford, 2006), 34–7; R. Love, 'The library of the Venerable Bede', in *The history of the book in Britain, vol. I c. 400–1100*, ed. R. Gameson (Cambridge, 2011), 606–32; M.B. Parkes, *The scriptorium of Wearmouth-Jarrow* (Jarrow Lecture, 1982); M.P. Brown, *'In the beginning was the Word': books and faith in the Age of Bede* (Jarrow Lecture, 2000).

Later, Ceolfrith would alienate at least one book, the *Cosmographia* exchanged for eight hides of land along the River Fresca, so it seems that not all of the books held in the monastic library collection were regarded as indispensable items for study or devotion.[16] Nonetheless, the point made here reinforces the idea that just as Wearmouth-Jarrow was a role model for others to follow, so its monks needed resources in order to be able to act as *doctores* for their people.[17] From a stylistic point of view, we may note how the *bibliothecam* is utterly enriched, not only by the superlatives *nobilissimam copiosissimamque* but also by its origin, which comes emphatically in front of them: 'quam *de Roma* aduexerat'. Its provenance provides added importance and significance to the collection, so it must be kept, and it is of course '*ad instructionem ecclesiae necessariam*', and the monastery cannot do without it. For all these reasons the library collection must be maintained *integram*, 'whole' or 'complete' – just like the monastery itself.

Keeping the Control of the Monastery in the Monastic Family

> Sed et hoc sedulus eisdem solebat iterare mandatum, ne quis in electione abbatis, generis prosapiam, et non magis uiuendi docendique probitatem putaret esse quaerendam. 'Et uere', inquit, 'dico uobis, quia in comparatione duorum malorum, tolerabilius mihi multo est totum hunc locum in quo monasterium feci, si sic iudicauerit Deus, in solitudinem sempiternam redigi, quam ut frater meus carnalis, quem nouimus uiam ueritatis non ingredi, in eo regendo post me abbatis nomine succedat. Ideoque multum cauetote fratres semper, ne secundum genus umquam, ne deforis aliunde, uobis patrem queratis. Sed iuxta quod regula magni quondam abbatis Benedicti, iuxta quod priuilegii nostri continent decreta, in conuentu uestrae congregationis communi consilio perquiratis, qui secundum uitae meritum et sapientiae doctrinam aptior, ad tale ministerium perficiendum digniorque probetur, et quemcunque omnes unanimi caritatis inquisitione optimum cognoscentes elegeritis; hunc uobis accito episcopo rogetis abbatem consueta benedictione firmari. Nam qui carnali', inquit, 'ordine carnales filios generant, carnali necesse est ac terrenae suae hereditati carnales terrenosque quaerant heredes; at qui spiritales Deo filios spiritali semine uerbi procreant, spiritalia oportet sint cuncta quae agunt. Inter spiritales suos liberos eum maiorem

[16] *Historia abbatum*, 15. On the *Cosmographia* see further below and Love, 'Library of the Venerable Bede', 609–10.

[17] On *doctores*, see: A.T. Thacker, 'Bede and the ordering of understanding', in *Innovation and tradition in the writings of the Venerable Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Morgantown, WV, 2006), 37–63.

> qui ampliori spiritus gratia sit praeditus aestiment, quomodo terreni parentes, quem primum partu fuderint, eum principium liberorum suorum cognoscere, et caeteris in partienda sua hereditate praeferendum ducere solent'.
>
> He also used to repeat this instruction to them with urgency, that in electing an abbot no-one should think that family relations should be considered over and above good character in life and teaching. 'And truly I tell you', he said, 'when I think of the two evils, it would be much easier for me to bear the reduction of this whole place where I have built a monastery to wasteland forever, if God so judged it, than for an earthly brother of mine, whom I know has not entered into the way of truth, to follow me with the title of abbot and to rule in it. On this account you should always be very careful, brothers, not to look for a father for yourselves according to family ties or from anywhere outside the community. You should instead look for one by sharing your opinions in the meeting of your community, following the rule of that great Benedict who was once an abbot and following what the decretals in our letter of privilege contain. Let the man who is more suitable on account of the merit of his life and the wisdom of his teaching be regarded as more worthy to occupy such an office; and with one mind you should all choose whoever you know is best through loving enquiry. Summon the bishop and ask for this man to be confirmed as abbot for you with the customary blessing. For', he said, 'those who raise sons according to the flesh in a fleshly manner have to look for fleshly heirs for their fleshly inheritance; but those who sire spiritual sons for God with the spiritual seed of the word should do all they do in a spiritual way. Among their spiritual sons let them judge him greater who is endowed with a fuller grace of the spirit, in the same way that earthly parents recognise the first-born son as the most important of their children, and are accustomed to think he should be preferred over the rest when their inheritance must be divided up'.

This third point is written at length and with especial care, making the whole speech into an ascending tricolon on an impressive scale. Left till last, and therefore (we may presume) closest to Benedict Biscop's heart, is the proper election of a successor, not 'according to family ties or from anywhere outside the community', but one elected according to the proper procedures laid down in the Rule of the monastery. The reference to the shadowy, un-named 'earthly brother of mine, whom I know has not entered into the way of truth' seems to reflect a genuine concern; he is mentioned in both *Historia abbatum* 11 and by the author of the *Vita Ceolfridi* in Chapter 16. Ian Wood has commented that 'it is possible to read the early history of Wearmouth in terms of it being a family-

monastery',[18] and it may well be that Bede is highlighting the difference between proper, regular practice (i.e. carried out according to the monastic rule) rather than what happened in pseudo-monasteries which were essentially family cartels and which might happen at Wearmouth-Jarrow without the application of due diligence.

This third extract is not only the longest but also the most complex. Here we should note the separation of *hoc ... mandatum* in the opening statement, 'Sed et *hoc* sedulus eisdem solebat iterare *mandatum*', and the emphatic tricolon (though with the emphasis in the second element, which contains details of the ideal candidate's qualities):

ne quis in electione abbatis,
generis *prosapiam,*
et non magis uiuendi docendique *probitatem*
putaret esse *quaerendam*.

The emphatic insertion of the dramatic appeal 'si sic iudicauerit Deus' (interrupting a sort of tricolon, for variety) is very emotive and locates Benedict Biscop's hope in God, and not in any earthly realm. There then follows a further a tricolon in:

in eo regendo // post me // abbatis nomine *succedat***.**

There are more complex and lengthy tricola in:

iuxta quod regula magni quondam abbatis Benedicti,
iuxta quod priuilegii nostri continent decreta,
in conuentu uestrae congregationis communi consilio
perquiratis,

And also in:

qui secundum uitae meritum et sapientiae doctrinam aptior,
ad tale ministerium perficiendum digniorque probetur,
et *quemcunque* omnes unanimi caritatis inquisitione *optimum*
cognoscentes elegeritis.

[18] Grocock and Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, lviii.

By this stage in the narrative the clauses are much longer and developed: there is balance and parallelism between *uitae meritum* and *sapientiae doctrinam* and between *aptior* and *digniorque*; together with some alliteration in 'c/q' in the last line which provides a staccato effect; assonance provided by the proliferation of *–o* and *–u* vowels; the majestic stress-rhythms created by the polysyllables, all of which make it a joy to read out loud.[19] The final powerful contrasts introduced by beginning the last sentences *nam qui ... at qui ...* act like hammer-blows to drive the points home, using emphatic stress patterns in the carefully balanced alliterative clauses at the very end of the Chapter with their internal rhyme:

quem primum ... eum principium ...
et ceteris ... *praeferendum ...*

This is finely-crafted writing without a shadow of a doubt, and without a shadow of a doubt more could be said.

Let us return to the historical contexts. We ought to ask the question: is Bede reflecting any kind of real turmoil which existed in the heart of Benedict Biscop, or is this simply a reflection of Bede's own anxieties at the time of writing in *c.* 716? There are literary parallels which might suggest the latter, particularly the concerns which Bede raises in his *Epistola* to Bishop Ecgberht of York; these are discussed below. But we ought first to consider whether what Bede puts into the mouth of his erstwhile teacher and monastic father could actually reflect a situation actually faced by the monastery. The talk of an 'earthly brother' in the speech makes it sound so: if the monasteries at Wearmouth and Jarrow had been established and managed by individuals with close family connections to Benedict Biscop, then it seems quite possible that this otherwise un-named 'earthly brother' of Biscop's might have felt that he had some claim on the foundation, or at least on the income from Wearmouth-Jarrow. After all, it should be borne in mind that the foundation(s) of Wearmouth and Jarrow were regal: sources of land granted by the king and by other benefactors. In fact, other pre-existing monasteries may have been uprooted in order to create the second foundation, at Jarrow, so there were precedents for changing the status of monasteries, and one might wonder whether any threat existed which could have led the same policy to have been applied to Wearmouth-Jarrow in *c.* 716.[20] As noted above, towards the very end of his life in 734, we find Bede in

[19] See the discussion of 'ancient ideas about euphony and cacophany' in L.P. Wilkinson, *Golden Latin Artistry* (Cambridge, 1970), 9–31, 43.

[20] Grocock and Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, xxix–xxxi; xli–xlii.

the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* urging that foundations be shut down and lands be redistributed. In particular he says:

> There are numerous places, as we are all well aware, described by the title monastery by a most foolish pen, but which have absolutely no trace of monastic life; from among these I would like some to be transferred by the authority of a synod from luxury to chastity, from vanity to verity, from immoderate attention to stomach and palate to moderation and holiness of heart, and to be acquired as the bulwark of an episcopal see which ought by then to be established.[21]

This passage and its continuation is discussed in greater depth below; for the time being we may note that from Bede's perspective, this suggestion is put forward because the sites in question were 'bad' monasteries, but was it based on precedent? In fact, might it even be regarded as normal practice (and it would explain the emphasis given in both the *Historia abbatum* and the *Vita Ceolfridi* to the separate letters of privilege obtained from Rome, to secure the on-going existence of the monasteries in which Bede spent the entirety of his own monastic life).[22]

It is useful to remind ourselves again of the key dates, too: the passage tells us that Benedict Biscop lapsed into illness three years before his final demise, which takes us back from 689 to 686 or 687 if we count inclusively. These were the years immediately following the death of Ecgfrith in 685, which were stormy times indeed. Ecgfrith's death at Nechtansmere in 685 led to the reign of Aldfrith, from 685 until 705, when Eadwulf briefly usurped the throne; then Osred, the son of Aldfrith, was restored in 705 but was murdered in 716 (coincidentally the year of the departure and death of Ceolfrith); the next king, Cenred, lasted only two years, from 716 to 718; Bede may have composed the *Historia abbatum* in this reign or (less likely) the next, that of Osric (718–729), who was succeeded by Ceolwulf in 729 – deposed but quickly restored 731 – and who resigned his throne in 737.[23]

---

[21] Bede, *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 10: 'sunt loca innumera stilo stultissimo, ut nouimus omnes, in monasteriorum ascripta uocabulum, sed nichil prorsus monasticae conuersationis habentia; e quibus aliqua uelim de luxuria ad castitatem, de uanitate ad ueritatem, de intemperantia uentris et gulae ad continentiam et pietatem cordis synodica auctoritate transferantur atque in adiutorium sedis episcopalis, quae nuper ordinari debeat, assumantur'.

[22] See: Grocock and Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, xxxii, xlv.

[23] Dates taken from the Chronological table printed in S. DeGregorio (ed.), *The Cambridge companion to Bede* (Cambridge, 2010), xviii–xx. *Cf.* N.J. Higham, *The Kingdom of Northumbria AD 350–1100* (Stroud, 1993), 145.

Nick Higham has commented that this was an age of turmoil: 'regicide, assassination, civil war, burnings, forcible tonsuring, exile – all were familiar elsewhere in Anglo-Saxon England. What separates the Northumbrian kings from their neighbours is the apparent normality of these methods of disposing of kings and their rivals'.[24] The same policies might be applied outside the royal court: so could those lands granted by royal generosity to a monastic foundation be considered an object of inheritance in the same sort of way as those granted to a thegn? In *Historia abbatum* 11 it certainly seems that Benedict Biscop feared that the 'earthly brother of mine, whom I know has not entered into the way of truth' might have thought so. We might also note the case of Ecgfrith's Queen Eormenburg, who 'wanted the return of the royal dower lands', perhaps one of the issues which led to hostility with Wilfrid and the exile of the bishop, whose appeal to Rome, though ultimately successful, did not lead to anything like a complete restoration of the territory over which he had once held sway; this seems to be a precedent for the reassignment of royal lands, and must date to the years before Wilfrid's exile, that is, before 678.[25] Uncertainty about future threats to the kingdom from the British – which might affect the security and status of the monastery – might also have had a part to play; this might have been particularly important after Nechtansmere in 685, but Bede also highlights a danger from schismatics in a speech attributed to Cuthbert in Chapter 29 of the prose *Vita S. Cuthberti*, a text traditionally assigned to the period before 721.[26] The 'schismatics' referred to in that speech were almost certainly the Britons of Strathclyde.[27]

So there seems to be some good argument for regarding this speech as being more than rhetoric: it fits quite nicely into the political context of 685 and the years following. James Campbell comments that 'Ecgfrith, after his death in battle (685), was succeeded by his Irish half-brother Aldfrith. This can

[24] Higham, *Kingdom of Northumbria*, 145. See also: J. Campbell, 'Secular and political contexts', in *The Cambridge companion to Bede*, ed. DeGregorio, 25–39.

[25] Stephen of Ripon, *Vita Wilfridi*, 24. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica* 4.12 omits all detail about the reasons for the breach between king and bishop. Wood, *Origins of Jarrow*, 27–8.

[26] On Bede's prose *Vita Cuthberti* (ed. B. Colgrave, *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert*, 142–306), see: W. Berschin, '*Opus deliberatum ac perfectum*: why did the Venerable Bede write a second prose *Life of Saint Cuthbert*?' in *St. Cuthbert, his cult and his community to AD 1200*, eds G. Bonner, D.W. Rollason and C. Stancliffe (Woodbridge, 1989), 95–102; E. Knibbs, 'Exegetical hagiography: Bede's prose *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*', *Revue Bénédictine*, 114 (2004), 233–52.

[27] I am indebted to Ian Wood for drawing this point to my attention. See further: C. Stancliffe, *Bede and the Britons*, 2005 Whithorn Lecture (Stranraer, 2007), 29–30; A.T. Thacker, 'Bede, the Britons and the Book of Samuel', in *Early Medieval studies in memory of Patrick Wormald*, eds S.D. Baxter, C.E. Karkov, J.L. Nelson and D.A.E. Pelteret (Farnham, 2009), 129–47.

hardly have been an easy succession; for there must have been dangerous, even murderous, enmity behind Aldfrith's having spent much of his exile in Ireland'.[28] Aldfrith 'the scholar-prince who was illegitimate half-brother and successor to Ecgfrith' is seen more positively elsewhere; Benedict Biscop obtains three hides from him for 'two cloaks of pure silk, whose workmanship was without equal' (*Historia abbatum* 9) and then Ceolfrith:

> With the gift of a volume of cosmographies, of marvellous workmanship, which Benedict had purchased at Rome, he also obtained for the possession of the monastery of the blessed apostle Paul eight hides of land along the river Fresca from King Aldfrith, who was very learned in the scriptures. So long as he still lived Benedict himself had placed great weight on negotiating its purchase with the same King Aldfrith, but he died before he was able to complete it. Later, when Osred was king, Ceolfrith exchanged this land, and a worthy sum of money besides, for twenty hides of land in the place which is called in the local language Elder Farm, because it seemed nearer to that monastery.[29]

Other candidates for a suitable time of turmoil might of course be 705, when on Aldfrith's death, his heir Osred was only eight and Eadwulf – whose background is unknown – attempted a coup, but failed (and also failed to get so much as a mention in the *Historia ecclesiastica*), and later the turbulent political events of 716, which led to a further regime change. All these circumstances may have been uppermost in Bede's mind, since it is likely that both the *Historia abbatum* and the anonymous *Vita Ceolfridi* were written very soon after news of Ceolfrith's death reached Wearmouth-Jarrow, the former as early as 716, once the party who returned to Jarrow had reached their destination, and the latter shortly afterwards, as it contains information which must have been communicated by the party who went on to Rome and had crossed back over the Alps, probably in early summer 717, information which Bede's account does not include.[30] To

[28] Campbell, 'Secular and political contexts', 28. Aldfrith's career has been re-evaluated by B. Yorke, *Rex doctissimus: Bede and King Aldfrith of Northumbria* (Jarrow Lecture, 2009).

[29] *Historia abbatum*, 15: 'Dato quoque cosmographiorum codice mirandi operis, quem Romae Benedictus emerat, terram octo familiarum iuxta fluuium Fresca ab Aldfrido rege in scripturis doctissimo in possessionem monasterii beati Pauli apostoli comparauit, quem comparandi ordinem ipse, dum adhuc uiueret, Benedictus cum eodem rege Aldfrido taxauerat, sed priusquam complere potuisset obiit. Verum pro hac terra postmodum Osredo regnante Ceolfridus, addito pretio digno, terram uiginti familiarum in loco qui incolarum lingua ad uillam Sambuce uocatur, quia haec uicinior eidem monasterio uidebatur, accepit'.

[30] For the dating of the *Historia abbatum* and the *Vita Ceolfridi*, see: Grocock and Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, xxi–xxii.

passages from Bede's account concerning the departure of Ceolfrith we may now turn.

The Departure of Abbot Ceolfrith (*Historia abbatum* 16–17)

It is possible that Ceolfrith's departure was in some way a result of the murder of Osred, who was called 'a new Josiah' in Bede's Metrical *Vita Cuthberti*, indicating that (at least at the start of Osred's reign) he held out some promise.[31] The subsequent deterioration in the regime's moral standards may have meant that Ceolfrith could stand his regime no longer; or perhaps the murder prompted his sudden departure because he had been a supporter of the old regime. Either way, the timing seems more than coincidental. In the *Historia abbatum*, Bede tells the story like this, beginning half-way through Chapter 16:

> Now he saw that, being old and full of days, he could no longer prove to be an appropriate model of spiritual exercise for those under him either by teaching or by example because he was so aged and infirm. He thought over the matter long and hard, and decided that it would be more appropriate for an instruction to be given to the brothers that they should choose a more suitable father-abbot for themselves from among their own number, following the statutes of their privilege and the rule of the holy abbot Benedict. He himself would then make his way to the holy places of the blessed apostles at Rome, where as a young man he had been with Benedict, so that he might be discharged of earthly responsibilities for a little while before his death and could more easily have a little quiet and privacy for himself. When they had chosen a younger abbot the brothers could then more carefully keep the commands for living according to the rule, seeing that their master was near in age to them.[32]

---

[31] Bede, *Vita Cuthberti metrica* (ed. W. Jaager, *Bedas metrische Vita sancti Cuthberti*), lines 522–5. Campbell, 'Secular and political contexts, 29; M. Lapidge, 'Bede's metrical *Vita S. Cuthberti*', in *St. Cuthbert, his cult and his community*, eds Bonner, Rollason and Stancliffe, 77–93, at 77–8.

[32] Bede, *Historia abbatum*, 16: 'uidit se iam senior et plenus dierum non ultra posse subditis, ob impedimentum suppremae aetatis, debitam spiritalis exercitii, uel docendo uel uiuendo, praefigere formam; multa diu secum mente uersans, utilius decreuit, dato fratribus praecepto, ut iuxta sui statuta priuilegii iuxtaque regulam sancti abbatis Benedicti, de suis sibi ipsi patrem, qui aptior esset, eligerent, ipse beatorum apostolorum, ubi iuuenis cum Benedicto fuerat, Romae loca sancta repeteret, quatinus et ipse ante mortem aliquandiu saeculi curis absolutus, liberius sibimet secreta quiete uacaret; et illi sumpto abbate iuueniore perfectius iuxta aetatem magistri quae uitae regularis essent instituta seruarent'.

The beginning of Chapter 17 continues the narrative as follows:

> Although at first everyone opposed him and went down on their knees to implore him again and again till they wept and sobbed, it was done as he wished. His desire for departing was so great that he set out on his journey just two days after he had disclosed his secret intention to the brothers, for he was afraid that he would die before he could reach Rome – which is what happened – and at the same time did not want his projects to be obstructed by his friends or by men of importance, who held him in high esteem, or that money should be given to him by anyone to whom he could not return it for the time being; for it was always his habit to repay anyone who gave him any kind of gift with no less grace either immediately or after a suitable interval. ... He said his final farewell, urging them to maintain their mutual affection and to reprove those who abandoned the rule, according to the gospel; he offered the grace of his forgiveness and assurance of peace to everyone, in case they had committed any kind of fault; he implored them all to pray for him and, if there were any he had criticised harder than was right, to show a spirit of peace towards him.[33]

The cause of Ceolfrith's departure is here explained as foresight: the Wearmouth-Jarrow community would need a younger man than Ceolfrith was, and he would be free to undertake a pilgrimage; there is no hint of tensions or threats which might disturb the smooth and continued existence of the monasteries. However, there might be some implicit criticism in the words 'they should choose a more suitable father-abbot for themselves' (Chapter 16). Placed in Ceolfrith's own mouth, the words stress his awareness of his own failing faculties and the need for fresh, more vigorous leadership; but it is interesting that the spectre of an appointment based not on the procedure of the monastic rule, but on some other basis, might have been a possibility; at the very least there seem to have

[33] Bede, *Historia abbatum*, 17: 'Obnitentibus licet primo omnibus et in lacrimas singultusque genua cum obsecratione crebra flectentibus factum est quod uoluit. Tantaque erat proficiscendi cupido, ut tertia die ex quo fratribus secretum sui propositi aperuit, iter arriperet. Timebat enim, quod euenit, ne priusquam Romam peruenire posset, obiret, simul deuitans ne ab amicis siue uiris principalibus, quibus cunctis erat honorabilis, eius coepta retardarentur, et ne pecunia daretur illi a quibusdam quibus retribuere pro tempore nequiret: hanc habens semper consuetudinem, ut siquis ei aliquid muneris offerret, hoc illi, uel statim, uel post interuallum competens, non minore gratia rependeret ... uale dicens ultimum, de conseruanda inuicem dilectione, et delinquentibus iuxta euangelium regulam corripiendis, ammonet; omnibus, siquid forte deliquissent, gratiam suae remissionis et placationis offert; omnes pro se orare, sibi placatos existere, si sint quos durius iusto redarguisset, obsecrat'.

been some concerns about members of the community who had 'abandoned the rule' (Chapter 17).

The tale is very powerfully told, with distinct echoes of the farewell discourse of Benedict Biscop – much more rhetorically in the original Latin than is possible to convey in a translation – and is redolent with details which seem to be based on the personal experience of both the teller and of the participants. The emphasis is one of poignancy, and reinforces Bede's comments on the suddenness of the incident which he inserted into the preface to his commentary on the fourth book of 1 Samuel, saying that the 'time of relaxation' which he was enjoying:

> If you can call sudden mental anxiety relaxation – came to me rather later than I had intended, because of the sudden change of circumstances, due in particular to the departure of my most revered abbot. After a long time spent taking care of the monastery, he suddenly decided to go to Rome and to breathe his last as an old man in places made holy by the bodies of the blessed apostles and martyrs of Christ, and astonished the minds of those entrusted to him not a little, the more so because the disturbance was unexpected.[34]

This recollection of a personal reaction – perhaps unexpected in a formal piece of work such as a biblical commentary – underscores the hurried nature of Ceolfrith's departure.[35] At the same time, it is a very blunt account, compared with the more elegiac reconstruction in *Historia abbatum* 16 and 17. It is worth noting that Bede incorporates repeated references to Benedict Biscop and his legacy in those passages, implying that what must now be protected (in 716) is essentially the same as was in place in 689. In Bede's *Historia abbatum*, the potential of outside interference is firmly placed in the earlier period and only hinted at in very general terms in 716.

The threats facing the monastery set out in the account of the same events provided by Chapter 20 of the anonymous *Vita Ceolfridi* are rather more detailed. The points made are similar to those attributed to Benedict Biscop in

---

[34] Bede, *In primam partem Samuhelis* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119, 5–287), 4, lines 4–12 (translation my own): 'si tamen quies dicenda est inopinata mentis anxietas, prolixior multo quam decreueram noua circumstantium rerum mutatione prouenit maxime discessu abbatis mei reuerendissimi, qui post longam monasterialis curae obseruantiam subitus Romam adire atque inter loca beatorum apostolorum ac martyrum Christi corporibus sacra, extremu senex halitum reddere disponendo, non parua commissorum sibi animos, et eo maiore, quo improuisa conturbatione stupefecit'.

[35] The circumstances surrounding Ceolfrith's departure are discussed in: P.N. Darby, *Bede and the end of time* (Farnham, 2012), 167–74.

the *Historia abbatum*. If Bede had invented those (and the lapse of time from 689 to 716 allows for some recasting of Benedict Biscop's words, to say the least), then we can interpret Bede's text as re-interpreting the earlier period through the prism of the events and situation of 716. However, we must remember that the anonymous *Vita Ceolfridi* focuses only on Ceolfrith; it is equally possible that genuine fears for the future which existed in 686–689 might have been forced back to the surface some thirty years later. The more specific nature of the fears for the future expressed in the *Vita Ceolfridi* is clear from the following statement:

> In order to make them [the monastic houses] more secure from intrusion by wicked men, [Ceolfrith] sent envoys to Rome to ask for and get a letter of privilege from pope Sergius of blessed memory, in the same terms as the one which Benedict had received from his predecessor.[36]

The key phrase here is 'to make them more secure from intrusion by wicked men'. The threat seems general, but required firm action, nothing less than a papal letter of privilege, which one assumes carried sufficient weight to assure the security of the foundation (though we may recall that papal affirmation of Wilfrid's claims in 679 did not lead to his restoration to all of the territory to which he laid claim).

Then after the context for Ceolfrith's departure has been explained in Chapter 21, we find the following points made (though direct speech is only used to communicate Ceolfrith's desires for his community at the very end, in *Vita Ceolfridi* 23–25):

> Speaking calmly and soothingly to them he asked them to keep the rule which he had taught, to remain in the fear of the Lord, and not to hold up the journey he had proposed with their prayers and weeping; and if any of his actions had been harsher than was right, that they would grant him pardon, because he himself had already forgiven all those who might have offended him in anything with all his heart, and his wish was that they would all delight in the Lord, then and always. … He instructed them to appoint, with the grace of his blessing and according to the rule of the holy father Benedict and the statues of their privilege, whoever from among their community they considered more worthy as abbot for themselves …

[36] Anonymous, *Vita Ceolfridi*, 20: 'monasteria … ut ab improborum irruptione securiora redderet, missis Romam legatariis, epistolam priuilegii a beatae memoriae papa Sergio petiit, et accepit, instar illius, quam ab Agathone decessor eius Benedictus acceperat'.

> telling them all to keep peace among one another, to beware of hatred, criticism, and causes for stumbling; that individuals should first speak to those who were sinning, according to the instruction in the gospel, and then two or three should speak to them and do their best to call them back to the way of truth, and, if their efforts bore fruit, let them rejoice; if not, let them reveal their sins publicly; that they should watch over their harmony and family unity with the brothers who were at Saint Paul's, remembering that both of them were a single monastery, always to be ruled by the same abbot; that, assuming their brotherly union was broken from within, their door should never be opened to outsiders who would break in and harm them, following the example of the Hebrew people, which through the stupidity of Solomon's son was divided against itself, and was never safe from disaster from outside.[37]

Compared to the exhortations attributed to Benedict Biscop by Bede in *Historia abbatum* 11, the urging in Chapter 24 of the *Vita Ceolfridi* seems rather general, not to say anodyne. The 'special pleading' about the unity of St Peter's and St Paul's is one of the principal differences between the accounts in the *Vita Ceolfridi* and Bede's *Historia abbatum*. Bede has already made use of a different biblical reference, in *Historia abbatum* 7, to express the point that Benedict Biscop had sent monks to Jarrow:

> on the basis that a single peaceful harmony and the same friendship and grace should be maintained in each of the two places in perpetuity, so that just as (to use an illustration) the body cannot be torn from the head, through which it breathes, and the head cannot forget about the body, without which it does not live, so

[37] Anonymous, *Vita Ceolfridi*, 23–5: 'Tunc illis multum plorantibus ac de subito eius abscessu turbatis leniter ac blande affatus uniuersos, rogauit ut regulam quam docuerat seruarent, in timore Domini permanerent, neque iter quod proposuerat suis precibus fletibusque impedirent, et ei, si quid intemperantius iusto egisset, ueniam darent, quia et ipse cunctis qui se in aliquo offenderant iam toto ex corde dimiserit, Dominumque omnibus placatum esse et tunc et semper optauerit … praecipiens ut cum suae gratia benedictionis iuxta regulam sancti patris Benedicti et sui statuta priuilegii quemcumque de suis digniorem putarent, abbatem sibi constituerent … alloquitur omnes, ut pacem inuicem seruent, ab odiis, detractionibus, et scandalis caueant, peccantes quosque iuxta praeceptum euangelii singuli primum, deinde bini uel terni alloquantur, atque ad uiam ueritatis reuocare satagent, et, si fructus sequatur industriam, gaudeant, sin alias, sic tandem ad publicum eorum errata proferant; concordiam unitatemque germanam cum fratribus, qui essent ad sanctum Paulum, custodiant, unum utrorumque monasterium esse meminerint, ab eodem semper abbate regendum; ne rupto interius foedere fraternitatis pandatur exteris ianua nociuae irruptionis, iuxta exemplum Hebreae plebis, quae, ut per stultitiam filii Salomonis contra seipsam diuisa est, nunquam externa a clade quieuit'.

> no man should try by any attempt to split these monasteries of the first apostles, joined as they are in their brotherly fellowship, apart from one another.[38]

The main similarity seems to be in the reminder to elect a successor abbot 'from among their community' and in the fear that the community might be threatened by 'outsiders who would break in and harm them'. Bede makes use of an analogy loosely based on the teachings of St Paul; the author of the *Vita Ceolfridi* prefers the Old Testament example of the division of Israel after Solomon under Rehoboam and Jeroboam, which Bede had already employed in relation to Benedict Biscop's period of illness in *Historia abbatum* 13.[39]

As was noted earlier, the context of the year 716 gives added force to the 'cares of worldly matters' which Ceolfrith was facing at the time, and may provide another reason for his leaving Northumbria apart from the ones given by either Bede or the Anonymous. Ceolfrith is made to voice clear concerns for the community he was leaving in the care of God. One of those concerns, according to the anonymous author of the *Vita Ceolfridi*, was the unity of Wearmouth and Jarrow. The Anonymous places the burden of maintaining this on the monks in the two locations: 'they should watch over their harmony and family unity with the brothers who were at Saint Paul's, remembering that both of them were a single monastery, always to be ruled by the same abbot',[40] though he also envisages a situation when 'their brotherly union was broken from within'.[41]

Retrospective Concerns in the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*

The likelihood of such division occurring has been discussed above in connection with the foundation of Jarrow. It seems that this was a threat which might come back to haunt the monastery at any time, depending on the political situation.[42]

---

[38] Bede, *Historia abbatum*, 7: 'ea dumtaxat ratione, ut una utriusque loci pax et concordia, eadem perpetua familiaritas conseruaretur et gratia: ut sicut uerbi gratia corpus a capite per quod spirat non potest auelli, caput corporis sine quo non uiuit nequit obliuisci, ita nullus haec monasteria primorum apostolorum fraterna societate coniuncta aliquo ab inuicem temptaret disturbare conatu'.

[39] Analogy of the body: Romans 12.4–5; 1 Corinthians 12.12–26; Ephesians 4.11–16. Division of Israel: 1 Kings 12.

[40] Anonymous, *Vita Ceolfridi*, 25: 'concordiam unitatemque germanam cum fratribus, qui essent ad sanctum Paulum, custodiant, unum utrorumque monasterium esse meminerint, ab eodem semper abbate regendum'.

[41] Anonymous, *Vita Ceolfridi*, 25: 'rupto interius foedere fraternitatis'.

[42] Grocock and Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, xxxix–xliii.

Given his horror at the possibility of the division of Wearmouth-Jarrow, and the fear of interference from outside, it may come as something of a surprise, then, to find Bede suggesting interference in other monasteries when it suited his own agenda. Such practices are advocated in the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, which was written in November 734, shortly before Bede's death in the following year (26 May 735). For example, in the letter to Ecgberht, who was the incumbent bishop of York at the time of writing, Bede suggests that:

> I had thought it advisable that with the agreement of a great council and by a decree of both bishop and king, some monastic location should be identified as a likely episcopal see, and in case the abbot or monks might try to obstruct or resist this decree, they should be given the freedom themselves to choose from their own number a man who would be ordained bishop.[43]

Bede then goes on to suggest that:

> If it were to appear necessary that such a monastery were to need enlarging with any greater possession of land in order to establish a bishopric, there are numerous places, as we are all well aware, described by the title monastery by a most foolish pen, but which have absolutely no trace of monastic life; from among these I would like some to be transferred by the authority of a synod from luxury to chastity, from vanity to verity, from immoderate attention to stomach and palate to moderation and holiness of heart, and to be acquired as the bulwark of an episcopal see which ought by then to be established.[44]

As Ian Wood comments, 'this amounts to the radical suggestion that charters should be torn up'.[45]

---

[43] Bede, *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 10: 'Quapropter commodum duxerim habito maiori concilio et consensu pontificali simul et regali edicto prospiciatur locus aliquis monasteriorum ubi sedes fiat episcopalis. Et ne forte abbas uel monachi huic decreto contraire ac resistere temptauerint, detur illis licentia ut de suis ipsi eligant eum qui episcopus ordinetur'.

[44] *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 10: 'at si opus esse uisum fuerit ut tali monasterio causa episcopatus suscipiendi amplius aliquid locorum ac possessionem augeri debeat, sunt loca innumera stilo stultissimo, ut nouimus omnes, in monasteriorum ascripta uocabulum, sed nichil prorsus monasticae conuersationis habentia; e quibus aliqua uelim de luxuria ad castitatem, de uanitate ad ueritatem, de intemperantia uentris et gulae ad continentiam et pietatem cordis synodica auctoritate transferantur atque in adiutorium sedis episcopalis, quae nuper ordinari debeat, assumantur'.

[45] Grocock and Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow*, 143.

Bede clearly regarded the need for monastic holiness as sufficient cause for thinking such a radical thought and repeated the view in the next paragraph of the *Epistola*:

> If anyone in those particular places were to establish an episcopal see there to respond to current needs, he will not incur blame for misusing it, but will rather receive approval for doing something excellent. For how could it be reckoned as a sin if the unjust judgments of our leaders are put right by the proper consideration of better leaders, and the lying scribble of wicked scribes is blotted out by the well-defined advice of wiser priests and reduced to nothing, like the example in the sacred history which depicts the reigns of the kings of Judah from David and Solomon up to Zedekiah … Following this example it behoves your holiness with the pious king of our people to rip up the impious and evil deeds and writings of earlier leaders, and to watch over those things in our province which are valuable either in the sight of God or in the sight of the world …[46]

The monasteries of which Bede was speaking may have been 'described by the title monastery by a most foolish pen', but they did have official status, despite Bede's objections, even though they did not carry the papal authority on which the security of Wearmouth-Jarrow rested.

Bede admits as much in the opening to section 12 of his letter to Ecgberht:

> Others, despite being laymen who have no experience of practising the monastic life and are endowed with no love for it … have the hereditary rights over these lands ascribed to them by royal warrants, and manage to get these charters of their privileges confirmed by the signature of bishops, abbots and secular authorities as though they were truly worthy in God's sight![47]

---

[46] *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 11: 'si quis in eisdem ipsis locis pro necessitate temporum sedem episcopatus constituat, non culpam praeuaricationis incurrere sed opus uirtutis magis agere probabitur. Quomodo enim in peccatum reputari potest si iniusta principum iudicia recto meliorum principum examine corrigantur; ac mendax stilus scribarum iniquorum discreta prudentium sacerdotum sententia deleatur ac redigatur in nichilum, iuxta exemplum sacrae hystoriae quae tempora regum Iuda a Dauid et Salomone usque ad ultimum Sedechiam describens … Quo exemplo tuam quoque sanctitatem decet cum religioso rege nostrae gentis irreligiosa et iniqua priorum gesta atque scripta conuellere, et ea quae prouinciae nostrae siue secundum Deum siue secundum seculum sint utilia prospicere …'.

[47] *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 12: 'alii … cum sint ipsi laici, et nullo uitae regularis uel usu exerciti uel amore praediti … in ius sibi haereditarium regalibus edictis faciunt asscribi ipsas quoque litteras priuilegiorum suorum quasi ueraciter Deo dignas pontificum abbatum et potestatum seculi obtinent subscriptione confirmari'.

Bede reaches a zenith of anger, stating that: 'wasps may well build combs but they store up poison in them, not honey'.[48] He goes on to assert that:

> For about thirty years, since King Aldfrith was taken from the world of men, our province has been driven mad by the lunatic policy that has resulted in there being almost none of the local rulers who has not acquired a monastery of this kind for himself during his period of office, and at the same time has bound his wife in just the same kind of guilt-ridden crooked business, and since the worst of customs is in force, the king's own ministers and servants do their best to pursue the same aims, and in this way numerous men may be identified who in a perverse manner call themselves both abbots and likewise local rulers or thegns or servants of the king.[49]

Since Aldfrith died in *c*. 705, the comments Bede makes here includes the period of Ceolfrith's departure in the summer months of 716. In this expression of personal feelings to Ecgberht it seems that Bede was in his old age giving vent to feelings which he may have felt for a while (but not felt it appropriate to express so explicitly) or which had developed over time as he reflected on the political events through which he and his foundation had lived.[50]

We might ask then, had Bede held these feelings for long? Was this an old man finally boiling over? Or is this the problem of looking back at a 'golden age' which never in fact existed? Or was Bede being unrealistic? Sarah Foot suggests

---

[48] *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 12: 'uespae fauos quidem facere cum possint non tamen in his mella sed potius uenena thesaurizent'.

[49] *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 13: 'Sic per annos circiter triginta, hoc est ex quo Aldfrid rex humanis rebus ablatus est, prouincia nostra uesano illo errore dementata est ut nullus paene exinde praefectorum extiterit qui non huiusmodi sibi monasterium in diebus suae praefecturae comparauerit suamque simul coniugem pari reatu nociui mercatus astrinxerit; ac praeualente pessima consuetudine ministri quoque regis ac famuli idem facere sategerint; atque ita ordine peruerso innumeri sint inuenti qui se abbates pariter et praefectos siue ministros aut famulos regis appellent'.

[50] Although nowhere does Bede express his concerns as explicitly as in his correspondence with Ecgberht, it is now well established that Bede advocated a comprehensive programme of reform across several of his writings: A.T. Thacker, 'Bede's ideal of reform', in *Ideal and reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon society*, eds P. Wormald, D. Bullough and R. Collins (Oxford, 1983), 130–53. For the application of this ideal in Bede's mature exegetical commentaries, see: S. DeGregorio, 'Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam* and the reform of the Northumbrian Church', *Speculum*, 79 (2004), 1–25; S. DeGregorio, '*Nostrorum socordiam temporum*': the reforming impulse of Bede's later exegesis', *Early Medieval Europe*, 11 (2002), 107–22. The relationship between Bede's reform agenda and the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* is examined in more depth in DeGregorio's contribution to this volume, Chapter 9.

that 'if his personal knowledge of communal monasticism did not reflect closely that of monks (and nuns) in other religious houses in Northumbria, we can scarcely be surprised if this coloured Bede's perception of the inadequacies of some monastic behaviour in his own day ... Looking back in maturity, Bede seemed to believe that a golden age of English Christianity had passed'.[51] It is quite possible that Bede's analysis was more correct than his bluster here might make us think: John Blair has observed that there was a 'boom in endowment' seen in the charter evidence which 'emphasises the abnormal conditions of the last three decades of the seventh century' which did not continue into the eighth century.[52] In the kingdoms of southern England at least, the roots of the problem lay some time before AD 700. Bede does not mention which holdings he has in mind, and they must remain a subject of conjecture, but it is unreasonable to dismiss his protests in the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* as those of an angry old man.

Conclusions

Bede's *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* suggests that the period from the death of Aldfrith in *c.* 705 was one in which threats from outside and the potential for requisitioning and reassigning monastic territory seemed to be a clear and present danger. However, the nature of the foundation of Wearmouth-Jarrow and the political crisis into which Northumbria may have been plunged by the death of Ecgfrith in 685 also provides some justification in regarding the words which Bede puts into the mouth of Benedict Biscop in *Historia abbatum* 11 as being a plausible reflection of a genuine fear about the future in the context of the years 686–689. They are surely not the *ipsissima verba* of Benedict Biscop but they do seem to reflect fairly convincingly the probable atmosphere of Northumbria post-Ecgfrith. It may be that the negotiations of which we read (for example: exchanging fine works of art for land), were part of a process by which the successive abbots of Wearmouth-Jarrow developed a rapport with the new king and assured him of their goodwill.

The image of his monastery so often presented by Bede is one of stability, order and faith, but the reality in which he actually worked appears to have been very much more fluid. It is notable that, despite the emphatic stress found in Bede's work that Wearmouth and Jarrow were intended to be a single foundation from

---

[51] S. Foot, 'Church and monastery in Bede's Northumbria', in *The Cambridge companion to Bede*, ed. DeGregorio, 54–68, at 60, 65.

[52] J. Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon society* (Oxford, 2005), 87.

the outset, the depiction of Ceolfrith's departure in *Historia abbatum* 16 and 17 when he left behind the (now twinned) community in 716 does not contain any indications of such threats from outside as are voiced by Benedict Biscop earlier in the same text; indeed there is not so much as a direct speech attributed to Ceolfrith in Bede's account, and his only concerns are about the obligations that he might incur if his departure were to be delayed. In the *Historia abbatum*, Bede uses rhetorical and stylistic devices to make the death of Benedict Biscop the focus for a direct and powerful admonition to the brethren of Wearmouth-Jarrow which maintains a very deliberate emphasis on unity. It seems that this stress on unity, and the fear that it might not last, was a perpetual concern, not just of Benedict Biscop, but also of Bede himself, as he looked to the future of his beloved home.

Chapter 4

Bede and Islam[1]

Calvin B. Kendall

In his influential book *Orientalism*, Edward Said included Bede among 'Christian polemicists against Islam', and spoke of 'a general European attempt from Bede to Luther ... to put a representative Orient in front of Europe, to *stage* the Orient and Europe together in some coherent way, the idea being for Christians to make it clear to Muslims that Islam was just a misguided version of Christianity'.[2] With respect to Bede, this generalisation goes too far.[3] Bede never conceptualised the 'Orient' in opposition to the West, and he had no notion of 'Islam' at all. But there is a core insight in Said's pronouncement that merits exploration.

Historians look back on the first Arab conquests in Asia, Africa and Europe as the onset of a clash between two great monotheistic religions – Christianity and Islam. The clash has been marked over the centuries not only by military conflicts in different parts of the world, but also by misinformation, misperceptions and negative stereotyping on both sides that continue to plague the modern world.

The initial Arab conquests would not have been perceived at the time as the beginnings of an epic duel of religions. Barbarian raids had been part of the common experience of the peoples of the Roman Empire for centuries past. Some of the invaders, like the Anglo-Saxons, were 'pagans' or 'heathens', which is to say, practitioners of polytheistic forms of religion; others, like the Goths, were Arian Christians. There was pillage and slaughter aplenty, but religion was not the primary issue. Eventually the marauders tended to settle

[1] I am especially grateful to Prof. Edward M. Griffin for his insightful critique of an early draft of this paper. Fundamental studies are: C. Plummer, *VBOH*, esp. vol. II, 338–9; R.W. Southern, *Western views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA, 1962), esp. 14–33; J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's Europe* (Jarrow Lecture, 1962); and K. Scarfe Beckett, *Anglo-Saxon perceptions of the Islamic World* (Cambridge, 2003). See also C.B. Kendall, *Bede: On Genesis* (Liverpool, 2008), 21–7.

[2] E.W. Said, *Orientalism*, 25th anniversary edition (London and New York, NY, 2003), 71 and 61.

[3] See the corrective comments of Scarfe Beckett, *Anglo-Saxon perceptions*, 19–21.

down with those remnants of the indigenous population that had not fled or been killed and over time their heathen or heretical practices were abandoned in favour of conversion, by persuasion or force, to orthodox Christianity.[4] But the Arab invaders were not amenable to religious assimilation, and by the time of the Spanish *Reconquista* and the Crusades, Muslims would be demonised in the West as monstrous infidels, worshippers of a trinity of idols, perfidious adversaries of the true faith.[5]

When we ask how and why the incursions of the Arabs into the crumbling Roman Empire came to be seen as a religious struggle with apocalyptic overtones, part of the answer must lie in the influence of the Venerable Bede (672/3–735), who, from his observation post in the monastery of Jarrow in Northumbria, began to view the conflict in that light. In order to appreciate his response, it will be necessary to trace Bede's growing awareness of the Arab invaders, whom he knew as 'Saracens', to show how his perception of their significance darkened over time, affecting his understanding of the present and the future, and to demonstrate why they were important for, but did not easily fit into, his framework for Salvation history and the end of time.

The juxtaposition of 'Bede' and 'Islam' in the title of this paper is in part ironic. Not only did the word 'Islam' not exist in either of Bede's languages, Anglo-Saxon or Latin, but almost nothing of what it signifies was known to Bede or his Western European contemporaries. There was a decisive break and difference between the nomadic, pre-Islamic people of the Arabian desert, known to Christian scholars like Jerome (*c.* 347–420) and Isidore of Seville (*c.* 560–636) as 'Saracens', and the Muslims who appeared in widely separated parts of the world in Bede's accounts of events after the year 632. But Bede could not have been aware of this distinction. The very existence of Muhammad was unknown to Western Europeans in the eighth century. Forms of his name do not begin appearing in European languages until the eleventh century and later.[6]

Being, as they were, ignorant of the advent of a dynamic religious prophet in Arabia, Western Europeans in the time of Bede likewise knew nothing of the

---

[4] For Bede's view of the conversion process, see C.B. Kendall, 'Modeling conversion: Bede's "anti-Constantinian" narrative of the conversion of King Edwin', in *Conversion to Christianity from Late Antiquity to the Modern Age*, eds C.B. Kendall, O. Nicholson, W.D. Phillips Jr and M. Ragnow (Minneapolis, MN, 2009), 137–59.

[5] N. Daniel, *Islam and the West: the making of an image*, revised edition (Oxford, 1993), esp. 338–43.

[6] Southern, *Western views of Islam*, 28. In the Old French epic, *The Song of Roland*, 'Mahumet' is one of three pagan deities; Dante encounters 'Maometto' in the ninth circle of Hell; one of Chaucer's characters in the *Canterbury Tales* speaks of God's messenger, 'Makomete'.

Qur'an in which the Prophet's message was recorded[7] nor of the Islamic faith that he and it inspired. Bede could not have been aware that the Arabs had abandoned their polytheistic beliefs when they surged aggressively out of the desert in the seventh century.[8] Nevertheless, he invested the Arab conquests of his age with an ominous religious significance.

There are two dimensions to this inquiry. The first is factual and historical. We must ask what Bede knew about the seventh- and eighth-century conquests by (originally) Arabic tribesmen in Palestine, Syria, North Africa, Spain and Gaul, including the ethnicity and religion of the conquerors, and how he knew it. The second is interpretative. We need to inquire how the theoretical lens – the methods of allegorical interpretation – through which Bede viewed these events ultimately influenced the way the Western world views Islam.

What Bede Knew and How he Knew it

First of all, Bede did not think of these marauders as 'Arabs', much less as 'Muslims'. His exclusive term for them was 'Saracens'. It was a term unique to Christian writers.[9] Jerome and Isidore, among others, had applied the term 'Saracens' to a pre-Islamic desert people of little (to them) importance and no theological significance, other than as being representative of several tribes mentioned in the Old Testament as descending from Abraham's illegitimate son Ishmael.

Jerome described the Saracens as nomadic, desert-dwelling robbers who lived in a hostile relationship to the people around them, attacking and being attacked by all.[10] According to Isidore, 'They are wrongly called Saracens, because they boast of being descendants of Sarah'.[11] This was a false etymology based on the biblical story of Sarah, the wife of the patriarch Abraham. Finding herself barren, Sarah persuaded her husband to beget a child on her slave Hagar. After

---

[7] More precisely, as Daniel, *Islam and the West*, 53, puts it, the Qur'an is considered in Islam to be 'the Word of God, the whole expression of revelation'.

[8] For new insights into the disappearance of polytheism in South Arabia before the time of Muhammad, see G.W. Bowersock, *The throne of Adulis: Red Sea wars on the eve of Islam* (Oxford, 2013), esp. 80–85 and 127–31.

[9] Scarfe Beckett, *Anglo-Saxon perceptions*, 93–7. She reviews the etymologies, genuine and fanciful, of 'Saracen'.

[10] See n. 19 below.

[11] *Etymologiae*, 9.2.57: 'Ipsi ... perverso nomine Saraceni vocantur, quia ex Sarra se genitos gloriantur'. My translation. Isidore's sources were Jerome, *Commentarii in Isaiam* (ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL 73, 73A), 5.21.13–17; and *Commentarii in Hiezechielem* (ed. F. Glorie, CCSL 75), 8.25.1–7. Bede nowhere cites this etymology, but he would almost certainly have been familiar with it.

the birth of Hagar's son Ishmael, Sarah miraculously conceived and bore a son of her own, Isaac. Sarah then demanded that Abraham cast out Hagar and Ishmael lest the elder son Ishmael become co-heir with her son Isaac (Genesis 16.1–15; 21.1–21). The descendants of Isaac were the 'chosen' people, the Israelites, the righteous Hebrews. The descendants of Ishmael, the Ishmaelites, now the Saracens, were outcasts, heathens, enemies of the faithful.

Jerome and Isidore's etymological suggestion of a false Saracenic descent offered a striking contrast between Sarah's true descendants – ultimately, spiritually, the Christians – and her false descendants – their infidel opponents, the descendants of Ishmael, the Saracens. This false etymology may have had something to do with the adoption of the term by writers of the late-seventh century and after, like Bede, to describe the Arab invaders of Asia, Africa and Europe.

I have next to trace, so far as possible, Bede's growing awareness of the threat the Saracens seemed to pose. There is no way of knowing when Bede first heard of Saracens, but it could have been in his childhood. Abbot Hadrian and Archbishop Theodore of Canterbury have been suggested as possible sources of information in Anglo-Saxon England for the Arabic invasions of Africa and Syria.[12] Bede tells us that Hadrian (d. 709/710) was 'a man of African race' (*uir natione Afer*), who, before being sent to Canterbury, was abbot of a monastery near Naples.[13] Hadrian probably reached Britain in 670. On his arrival he assumed the post of abbot of the monastery of Sts Peter and Paul, replacing Benedict Biscop, who went north to found the twin monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow where Bede was to spend his entire life. Michael Lapidge conjectures that Hadrian 'was born *c*. 635 in the Greek-speaking part of North Africa, probably in Libya Cyrenaica, and that he fled to Naples while still a youth (*c*. 645) as a refugee from the Arab conquest of North Africa'.[14] Muslim armies began to move westward out of Arabia almost immediately on Muhammad's death (632). Alexandria fell in 642.[15] In another year they had reached as far as Tripoli in the west of Libya.[16] If Hadrian went into exile from Cyrenaica around

[12] For Hadrian, see B. Bischoff and M. Lapidge, *Biblical commentaries from the Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian* (Cambridge, 1994), 82–132; and the entry by Lapidge in M. Lapidge, J. Blair, S. Keynes and D. Scragg (eds), *The Blackwell encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1999), 225–6. On Theodore, see Bischoff and Lapidge, *Biblical commentaries*, 5–81; and the entry by Lapidge, *Blackwell encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, 444–6.

[13] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.1.

[14] *Blackwell encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England*, 225.

[15] For the siege of Alexandria, see D.L. Lewis, *God's crucible: Islam and the making of Europe, 570 to 1215* (New York, NY; London, 2008), 80–83.

[16] R.A. Fletcher, *The Cross and the Crescent: the dramatic story of the earliest encounters between Christians and Muslims* (London; New York, NY, 2005), 13–14.

645 as a youth of ten, he could have experienced life under Muslim rule for two or three years.

Abbot Hadrian's older colleague, Theodore (602–690), who was consecrated as Archbishop of Canterbury in 668, is another possible source, though what information he might have possessed would derive from the northward sweep of Arab armies into Syria between 633 and 637 rather than from their westward sweep across North Africa. Circumstantial evidence suggests that Theodore, a native of Tarsus, studied as a young man in Antioch and Edessa before settling at some unknown date in Constantinople. He may have come to Constantinople as a refugee from the Arabic invasion of Syria. Only after he reached Rome, presumably from Constantinople, does Theodore emerge from the shadows into the steady light of history.[17] Benedict Biscop was in Rome when Pope Vitalian appointed Theodore to the archbishopric, and Benedict accompanied Theodore on the long journey to Canterbury.

There may be more bite, therefore, than would first appear in a gloss on Genesis 16.12 ['his hand will be against all men'] in a commentary on the Pentateuch from the school at Canterbury that is assumed to represent the thinking, if not the exact words, of Theodore and Hadrian. The gloss states: 'thus Ishmael's race was that of the Saracens, a race which is never at peace with anyone but is always at war with someone'.[18] The gloss was probably adapted from Jerome's comment on the same verse in Genesis, referred to above, in which he speaks of 'the nomadic Saracens who raid all the peoples on the edge of the desert, and who are attacked by all'.[19] The glossator has generalised Jerome's nomadic, desert-dwelling (pre-Islamic) people into a vaguely situated, menacing race that threatens everyone. This may reflect the personal experiences of Theodore and Hadrian in Syria and Cyrenaica,[20] and given the ties between Canterbury and Wearmouth-Jarrow some knowledge of these experiences might have reached Bede in his youth.

A definite early source of information about Saracens for Bede was the book, *De locis sanctis*, by Adomnán, abbot of Iona, who died in 704. According

---

[17] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.1–2.

[18] *Commentarius primus in Pentateuchum*, 104: 'sic fuit genus eius Saracenis, numquam cum omnibus pacem habentes sed semper contra aliquos certantes'. Text and translation: Bischoff and Lapidge, *Biblical commentaries*, 324–5.

[19] Jerome, *Hebraicae quaestiones in libro Geneseos*, 16.12, lines 18–20: '... Sarracenos uagos incertisque sedibus, qui uniuersas gentes, quibus desertum ex latere iungitur, incursant, et inpugnantur ab omnibus'; *cf.* Bede, *Libri quattuor in principium Genesis*, 4, lines 249–56.

[20] So, Lapidge, in *Biblical commentaries*, ed. Bischoff and Lapidge, 92; see commentary, 455–6.

to Adomnán, sometime in the later seventh century a Frankish bishop named Arculf made a pilgrimage to the Holy Lands, which at that time were under Muslim control.[21] We are told that on his return Arculf's ship was blown off course in a violent storm and wrecked somewhere on the west coast of Britain. Eventually, Arculf was supposed to have made his way to the monastery of Iona (or possibly to Ireland), where he dictated an account of his travels to Abbot Adomnán. Adomnán augmented what he claimed to have learned from Arculf with material from learned sources and turned this into the treatise *De locis sanctis*, which he presented to King Aldfrith on one or other of two visits to Northumbria in 686 and 688.[22] In it he refers three times to the presence of Saracens in the Holy Lands. On his second visit Adomnán spent time with Abbot Ceolfrith at Jarrow, where the young Bede (by this point in his early teens) might have had the opportunity of conversing with him and hearing what he had learned about these people.

Bede probably composed his own version of *De locis sanctis*, a reworking and abridgment of Adomnán's treatise, as early as 702 or 703, and certainly before 709.[23] Whatever the actual source of the observations attributed to Arculf, they accurately reflect some of the facts on the ground. By the time Jerusalem surrendered to them in 638, Muslim armies had wrested control of the whole of Palestine and Syria from the Romans. Damascus had fallen into their hands three years earlier.[24] It is therefore of particular interest with respect to Adomnán's three references to Saracens to notice what Bede chose to copy and what he altered. Bede repeated Adomnán's first reference with little variation. 'In the lower part of the city [of Jerusalem]', Bede writes, 'the Saracens now assemble for prayer. There they have built a square house of shoddy workmanship with upright planks and great beams over certain remains of the ruins [of the Jewish temple near the eastern wall]. It seems to hold three thousand people'.[25] The

[21] T. O'Loughlin, *Adomnán and the holy places: the perceptions of an insular monk on the locations of the biblical drama* (London; New York, NY, 2007), 50–64, argues that Arculf and the pilgrimage are for all practical purposes literary fabrications of Adomnán's, even though 'there may have been an individual human called Arculf' (quotation at 63).

[22] D. Meehan (ed.), *Adamnan's De locis sanctis* (Dublin, 1958), 4–5.

[23] For dating, see M.L.W. Laistner and H.H. King, *A hand-list of Bede manuscripts* (Ithaca, NY, 1943), 83.

[24] Fletcher, *The Cross and the Crescent*, 14.

[25] Bede, *De locis sanctis* (ed. J. Fraipont, CCSL 175, 245–80), 2.3, lines 53–8: 'In inferiore uero parte urbis ... nunc ibi Saraceni quadratam domum subrectis tabulis et magnis trabibus super quasdam ruinarum reliquias uili opere construentes oratione frequentant, quae tria milia hominum capere uidetur'. Translation: W.T. Foley and A. Holder, *Bede: A biblical miscellany* (Liverpool, 1999), 9; *cf.* Adomnán, *De locis sanctis*, 1.1.14.

disparaging remark about the Saracens' shoddy workmanship, which ultimately may be owing to the fact that the first mosque to be erected over the temple was made of wood,[26] is of a piece with Jerome's frequently re-echoed characterisation of pre-Islamic Saracens as an uncouth desert people. The assertion that the purpose of this 'shoddy' building was for prayer hints broadly that the religion practiced by the Saracens might be in some manner deviant.

The second reference to the Saracens occurs in connection with a romantic story about a relic preserved in a church in Jerusalem – a shroud which was placed over the head of Christ in the sepulchre.[27] A pious Christian Jew stole the shroud, we are told, shortly after the resurrection. He kept it hidden, and his affairs prospered mightily. On his deathbed he offered his two sons a choice: each was to say whether he wished to inherit all his wealth or the shroud. One chose his wealth and before long squandered it all. The other chose the shroud and prospered like his father. Here Bede subtly altered Adomnán's narrative. In his retelling of the episode, it is the *elder* son who chooses his father's treasure and the *younger* who chooses the shroud. This topos, the privileging of the younger son over the elder, is a major theme in Bede's *In Genesim*.[28] There he typologically equated Abraham's younger son, Isaac, with the Christians and his elder son, Ishmael, the putative ancestor of the Saracens, with both the Jews and Saracens.[29] Bede did not draw out the complex implications of the topos in *De locis sanctis*, but in view of its importance in his later thinking, it seems likely that he inserted it with some of these implications already formulated in his mind.

The narrative of the story of Christ's shroud goes on to relate that it descended through five generations of Christian Jews before coming into the hands of unbelievers, always enriching its possessors, and then disappeared for a while. When it was rediscovered, still in the hands of unbelievers, the Christian Jews of Jerusalem strove to take it from them. As Adomnán told the story, the contending parties appealed to the king of the Saracens, one Mavias, for judgement. Mavias took the shroud and ordered a great pyre to be kindled. When it was blazing, he 'said in a loud voice to the dissident parties: 'Now let Christ *the saviour of the world*, who suffered for the human race, who had this shroud ... placed on his head in the sepulchre, judge by the flame of the

[26] The wooden mosque was replaced by the great hexagonal Dome of the Rock by 691. Lewis, *God's crucible*, 78 and 100.

[27] Adomnán, *De locis sanctis*, 1.9.1–16; Bede, *De locis sanctis,* 4.1–3.

[28] Kendall, *On Genesis*, 19–21.

[29] Bede, *Libri quattuor in principium Genesis* (ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 118A), 3, lines 4–27; 4, lines 238–43. When the biological descendants of Isaac, the Israelites, refuse to accept Christ, they (the Jews) become, typologically, the spiritual descendants of Ishmael.

fire between you who contend for this cloth, that we may know on which of these two contending bands he will deign to bestow such a gift'.[30] The shroud, untouched by the fire, fluttered above the heads of the crowd, and finally settled among the Christian Jews, which decided the issue. Bede's abbreviated version of the story is similar to Adomnán's, but the sentence that corresponds to that just quoted reads: 'He lit a large pyre and implored Christ, who had deigned to wear the cloth on his head for the benefit of his own people [*pro suorum salute*], to serve as judge'.[31] The difference is slight, but indicative of Bede's caution. Adomnán quotes the king of the Saracens directly, and the king speaks of Christ as a believing Christian would; Bede reports the king's speech indirectly, and what the king says merely accounts for the miraculous property of the shroud – that it enriches its possessors; it does not imply that the king believed that Christ was the Saviour of mankind.

King Mavias or Mauvias (Bede) is known to modern history as Mu'awiya I, who was proclaimed Caliph at Jerusalem in 661, inaugurating the Umayyad Caliphate. He governed from Damascus until his death in 680.[32] After his inspection of the holy places in and around Jerusalem, Arculf purportedly extended his travels from Constantinople in the north to Alexandria in the south, visiting Damascus on the way. In Damascus, according to Bede's rephrasing of Adomnán, 'Christians frequent the church of St John the Baptist, while the king of the Saracens and his own people have erected and consecrated another church for themselves'.[33] In fact, during the Caliphate of Mu'awiya, Muslims and Christians shared the Temple of Jupiter, which had become the church of St John the Baptist.[34]

---

[30] Adomnán, *De locis sanctis*, 1.9.12–13, lines 58–64: '... eleuata uoce ad utrasque discordes dixit partes: 'Nunc Christus mundi Saluator, passus pro humano genere qui hoc quod nunc in sinu conteneo sudarium in sepulchro suum super capud habuit positum, inter uos de hoc eodem linteo contendentes per flammam iudicet ignis, ut sciamus cui partis horum duum exercituum contentiosorum hoc tale donum condonare dignetur'. Translation: Meehan, *Adamnan's De locis sanctis*, 55.

[31] Bede, *De locis sanctis*, 4.2, lines 14–16: 'Qui accensa grandi pyra Christum iudicem precatur, qui hoc pro suorum salute super caput habere dignaretur'. Translation: Foley and Holder, *Biblical miscellany*, 11. I have altered the translation of the bracketed Latin phrase.

[32] Lewis, *God's crucible*, 90–96.

[33] Bede, *De locis sanctis*, 17.1, lines 4–6: 'Vbi dum christiani sancti baptistae Iohannis ecclesiam frequentant, Saracenorum rex cum sua sibi gente aliam instituit atque sacrauit'. Translation: Foley and Holder, *Biblical miscellany*, 23. *Cf.* Adomnán, *De locis sanctis*, 2.28.2. Adomnán, going further than Bede, specifies that the Saracen church is 'a church of unbelievers' (*eclesia* (sic) *incredulorum*).

[34] Lewis, *God's crucible*, 95–6.

All in all, Bede's readers could infer that political control of a geographical area reaching from Palestine to Syria was in the hands of Saracens, who established churches of their own somehow deviant form of religion.[35] Still, Saracens occupy a relatively minor and unthreatening place in *De locis sanctis*. Bede's principal concern was with the Christian churches that crowd a landscape steeped in Judaeo–Christian sacred history. There is no suggestion that Christian pilgrims were hindered in any way from going where they wished and worshipping as they pleased. Mu'awiya is known to have cultivated good relations with the Christians;[36] Bede said nothing, and perhaps knew nothing, about the military conquest of the Holy Lands by the Muslims, which lay behind Mu'awiya's appointment as Caliph.

In his *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, 'completed soon after 709',[37] Bede associates the Ammonites and Saracens of the time of Moses with idol worship. The context of his comments is the protomartyr Stephen's speech to the council immediately before he is stoned to death (Acts 7). Stephen recalls the backslidings of the Israelites into idolatry, and he quotes the words of the prophet Amos, who said: 'And you took unto you the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of your god Rempham' (Acts 7.43; Amos 5.25). Bede explains that Moloch is the idol of the Ammonites, and that the star of Rempham is Lucifer whom the Saracens worshipped in honour of Venus.[38]

A casual mention of the Saracens in the brief gazetteer appended to the *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, gives an impression of tolerant curiosity on Bede's part. Chapter two of Acts recounts how in Jerusalem after the Ascension the disciples of Jesus received the Holy Spirit and began to talk in tongues. A crowd of devout men from all the nations on earth gathered, among them Arabians (Acts 2.11). In his comment on this passage, Bede enumerates several peoples inhabiting Arabia, including Saracens.[39] When he penned these words,

---

[35] R. Fletcher, *The Barbarian conversion: from paganism to Christianity* (paperback reprint, Berkeley, CA, 1999), 304–5, makes the point that medieval Christendom could not imagine a new religion, but only heretical deviations from the true faith. So also Fletcher, *The Cross and the Crescent*, 17–18. The fact that both Adomnán and Bede use the term 'ecclesia', rather than, say, 'templum', for the Saracens' place of worship is consistent with Fletcher's dictum.

[36] Meehan, *Adamnan's De locis sanctis*, 9; Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's Europe*, 77.

[37] Laistner and King, *Hand-List*, 20; see also G.H. Brown, *A companion to Bede* (Woodbridge, 2009), 14; F. Wallis, *Bede: Commentary on Revelation* (Liverpool, 2013), 39–43.

[38] *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum* (ed. M.L.W. Laistner, CCSL 121, 3–99), 7, lines 93–103. Bede's source for these observations was Jerome. In *De natura rerum* (ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123A, 189–234), 13, Bede explains that the 'star' Venus is also called Lucifer and Vesper.

[39] *Nomina regionum atque locorum de Actibus Apostolorum* (ed. M.L.W. Laistner, CCSL 121, 167–78), lines 20–22: 'Arabia: regio inter sinum maris rubri qui Persicus et eum qui Arabicus

he certainly had no hesitation in imagining that Saracens might have been among the 'devout men' in Jerusalem listening to the disciples of Jesus.

Both *De locis sanctis* and the *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum* were composed before a mixed Arab–Berber army crossed the Straits of Gibraltar in 711 and rapidly overran Visigothic Spain, bringing Islam into Western Europe. Whether news of these events ever reached Bede in Northumbria we do not know.[40] He never explicitly refers to Saracens being in Spain, and there is no surviving evidence that he was aware of an invasion that took place in 711. We might infer that he had heard something about it, vague rumours perhaps, based on the suggestive fact that after that date he would never again speak of the Saracens otherwise than as a hostile present-day menace. In his commentary *In Cantica Canticorum*, which Arthur Holder has demonstrated was completed prior to 716,[41] Bede remarks: 'Cedar was the son of Ishmael of whom it is written: 'his hand will be against all men, and all men's hands against him' [Genesis 16.12]. The heathen race of the Saracens, *hateful to all today*, who descend from him, prove the truth of this prophecy'.[42] However, it is just as likely that his hardening attitude towards the Saracens stemmed from new information about the situation in Syria, Palestine, North Africa and the Mediterranean.

Bede's Interpretative Lens

Bede had written the first three books of his commentary, *In primam partem Samuhelis*, by June 716, when Abbot Ceolfrith's abrupt departure for Rome caused an upheaval in the twin monasteries of Wearmouth and Jarrow. It wasn't until the election of Hwætberht as the new abbot later in the year that Bede recovered from his shock and was able to complete his commentary with a

uocatur habet gentes multas, Moabitas, Ammanitas, Idumaeos, Sarracenos aliasque quam plurimas'.

[40] Wallace-Hadrill's assertion ('Bede's Europe', 82) that 'Bede grasped something of the significance of the Arab invasion of 711' is an unsupported assumption.

[41] A. Holder, 'The anti-Pelagian character of Bede's commentary on the Song of Songs', in *Biblical studies in the Early Middle Ages*, eds C. Leonardi and G. Orlandi (Florence, 2005), 91–103, at 100–103.

[42] *In Cantica Canticorum* (ed. J.E. Hudson, CCSL 119B, 381–409), 1.1.4, lines 214–17: 'Cedar Ismahelis fuit filius de quo dictum est: *Manus eius contra omnes, et manus omnium contra eum*. Cuius praesagii ueritatem et exosa omnibus hodie Sarracenorum qui ab eo orti sunt natio probat ...'. My translation and emphasis.

fourth book.[43] So, sometime in the autumn of 716, Bede came to explicate the two verses from 1 Samuel 25.1, 'And Samuel died, and all Israel was gathered together, and they mourned for him, and buried him in his house in Rama. And David rose and went down into the wilderness of Pharan'.

For Bede and his fellow exegetes, the prophets of the Old Testament were not alone in foretelling the future. Every name, object, person, number and event of the Old Testament might potentially shadow forth, or mystically prefigure, some truth of the New Testament. With the advent of Christ, the foreshadowing of the Old Testament was buried, as the prophet Samuel was buried 'in his house in Rama', which Bede interprets as the Church of believers.[44] His interpretation of the second verse, 'And David rose and went down into the wilderness of Pharan', reveals just how complex, not to say conflicted, his allegorical understanding of the Saracens of his own day was:

> Pharan means 'wild ass' or 'fruitful' or 'their ferocity'. Once the prefiguration of prophecy had ceased and been fulfilled both in Rama, that is, in Christ, as I have said, and in the Church, and the country of the Jews had been forsaken, the truth of faith was deemed worthy to go forth *to the Gentiles, who were long wild and of an untameable spirit, but are now to be made fruitful with the fruits of justice*. 'Pharan' is very aptly suited to signify the Gentiles not only on account of its wild and rustic name but also because of its cruel and fierce inhabitants. For Scripture relates that Ishmael, from whom the Saracens are descended, dwelt in the wilderness of Pharan [Genesis 21.21]. He is the one of whom it is said: 'Cast out the bondwoman [Hagar] and her son; for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman [Sarah]' [Galatians 4.30 (*cf.* Genesis 21.10)]. The son of the free woman, that is, people renewed by spiritual grace, fearing his turbulent vicinity, laments, saying, 'Woe is me, that my sojourning is prolonged! I have dwelt with the inhabitants of Cedar' [Psalms 119.5 (120.5)], and so forth to the end of the Psalm. *These words describe the Saracens in particular and all the adversaries of the Church in general.* But in order that Christ might also summon to freedom [from the Old Law] peoples from the sons of the bondwoman, that is, *peoples in servitude in this age* [i.e. the Sixth Age, or modern times], and make them, 'as Isaac was, the children of promise' [Galatians 4.28], after being put to flight by the proud Jews, [David] went down into the wilderness of Pharan, that

[43] For details of the 'crisis' of 716, see Kendall, *On Genesis*, 47–53 and, with reference to Bede's eschatology, P.N. Darby, *Bede and the end of time* (Farnham, 2012), 165–85.

[44] *In primam partem Samuhelis* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119, 5–287), 4, lines 796–809.

> is, after the hearts of the Gentiles had been humbled, [Christ] poured into them the grace of his piety.[45]

The Saracens, the descendants of Ishmael, are 'cruel and fierce' and a particular type of 'the adversaries of the Church', but they are also embodiments of the Gentiles, 'peoples in servitude in this age', who, humbled by the grace of Christ, may be made 'as Isaac was, the children of promise'. That is, the Saracens might become the descendants of Sarah and Isaac in a spiritual sense (true 'Saracens' after all!). Bede was, or would become, I suspect, not a little troubled by the implications of his own commentary.

The Saracen Menace Looms Large

An explicit assumption of Bede's mature thought was that the conversion of the Gentiles was almost complete.[46] Europe, Asia and Africa made up the 'whole circle of lands' that constituted the inhabited world as Bede understood it, Asia being equal in size to Europe and Africa combined.[47] The Roman Empire, Christianised since the fourth century, extended at its height over much the greater part of this tripartite division of lands. Bede was, of course, conscious of the ever-present threat of various heresies within the Empire, most particularly the Arian heresy, though vigorous condemnation by Church councils and timely conversions to orthodoxy served to keep the threat at bay. He was also aware that the Persian Empire, which occupied an ill-defined region of Asia to the

[45] *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 810–30 (I have adopted several readings from the text in PL 91): 'Faran interpretatur onager siue frugifer aut ferocitas eorum. Cessante ergo prophetiae typo et in Rama, id est in Christo ut dictum est et ecclesia, consummato relicta Iudaea fidei ueritas gentes diu feras et indomabilis animi sed iam nunc iustitiae fruge fecundandas adire dignata est. Nec solum propter nomen agreste uel ferum sed et propter incolas diros ac feroces Faran gentibus significandis aptissime congruit. Narrat enim scriptura Ismahelem a quo genus duxere Sarraceni in deserto Faran habitasse illum uidelicet de quo dictum est: *Eice ancillam et filium eius, non enim heres erit filius ancillae cum filio liberae*. Cuius uicinitatem turbulentam horrescens filius liberae, id est populus spiritali gratia renouatus, queritur dicens, *Heu me quod incolatus meus prolongatus est, habitaui cum habitantibus Cedar*, et cetera usque ad finem psalmi quae Sarracenos specialiter aduersarios ecclesiae cunctos generaliter describunt. Sed ut etiam de ancillae filiis, id est de huic saeculo seruientibus populis, Christus ad libertatem uocaret hosque secundum Isaac promissionis efficeret filios fugatus a superbis Iudaeis descendit in desertum Faran, hoc est humiliata gentilium corda suae gratiam pietatis infudit'. My translation and emphases.

[46] Darby, *Bede and the end of time*, 201–6.

[47] *De natura rerum*, 51, line 2: 'Terrarum orbis uniuersus'. Translation: C.B. Kendall and F. Wallis, *Bede: On the nature of things and On times* (Liverpool, 2010), 102.

east of Syria and Palestine, was hostile to Christianity.[48] With all allowances made, however, as Bede would have seen it, most of Europe, Asia and Africa had become or was becoming Christian.

However, by the mid-twenties of the eighth century, Bede seems to have come into possession of more specific information about the advance of Arab armies around the world. In Book 4 of *In Genesim* (722–725),[49] he explains the significance of the verse in Genesis [16.12]: '[Ishmael] will be a wild man, his hand will be against all men, and all men's hands against him'. This, Bede says, quoting Jerome, 'means that Ishmael's seed was to dwell in the desert, and without fixed habitations. These are the nomadic Saracens who raid all the peoples on the edge of the desert, and who are attacked by all'.[50] Then he adds, in his own words: 'But this was long ago. Now, however, his hand is against all men, and all men's hands are against him, to such an extent that the Saracens hold the whole breadth of Africa in their sway, and they also hold the greatest part of Asia and some part of Europe, hateful and hostile to all'.[51]

Given Bede's understanding of global geography, this is a reasonably accurate description of the situation. By 722–725, roughly 90 years after the death of Muhammad, in addition to the Arabian peninsula Muslims occupied all of Syria and Palestine and most of the territories of the Persian Empire ('the greatest part of Asia'), Egypt and all of coastal North Africa as far as the Atlantic ('the whole breadth of Africa'), nearly all of Spain and parts of Septimania in southern Gaul ('some part of Europe').[52] Surely, the reports that reached Bede in the last decade or so of his life must have cast the shadow of a doubt on his optimistic assumption about the conversion of the Gentiles. The Saracens, the heirs of the Old Covenant,[53] adversaries of Christ, 'hateful and hostile to all', had seized possession of nearly three-quarters of the world.

Bede completed his magnum opus on the *computus*, *De temporum ratione*, the composition of which may have extended over several years, in 725. Chapter 66 of this work is what is known as the *Chronica maiora*, a chronological summary

[48] See, for example, the *Chronica maiora* entry for A.M. 4565 (610 CE).

[49] For this dating, see Kendall, *On Genesis*, 45–53.

[50] *Libri quattuor in principium Genesis*, 4, lines 246–9: 'Significat semen eius habitaturum in eremo, id est Saracenos uagos, incertisque sedibus. Qui uniuersas gentes quibus desertum ex latere iungitur incursant, et expugnantur ab omnibus'. Translation: Kendall, *On Genesis*, 279.

[51] *Libri quattuor in principium Genesis*, 4, lines 249–54: 'Sed haec antiquitus. Nunc autem in tantum manus eius contra omnes, et manus sunt omnium contra eum, ut Africam totam in longitudine sua ditione premant, sed et Asiae maximam partem, et Europae nonnullam omnibus exosi et contrarii teneant'. Translation: Kendall, *On Genesis*, 279.

[52] For a convenient summary, see Fletcher, *The Cross and the Crescent*, 13–15.

[53] *Libri quattuor in principium Genesis*, 4, lines 235–44.

of world history from Creation to the year 725. In it Bede makes three references to the military exploits and reverses of the Saracens. Under the heading for the year 684 [A.M. 4639], taking his information from the *Liber Pontificalis* (79.3),[54] he asserts: 'The Saracens invaded Sicily, and then returned to Alexandria, taking with them much booty'.[55] As noted above, the Arabs captured Alexandria in 642; what is implied here is that they were securely enough established in eastern Africa by the second half of the seventh century to use the city as a naval base for raids in the Mediterranean.

Under the year 694 [A.M. 4649], again quoting the *Liber Pontificalis* (84.3), Bede states: '[Justinian] made a ten-year peace on land and sea with the Saracens. But the province of Africa was brought under the control of the Roman empire. It had been occupied by the Saracens ...'.[56] The reality appears to be that sometime around 683 the Arab governor of North Africa was killed in battle by a Berber chieftain (possibly with help from Byzantium), who in the following year went on to capture Kairouan in what is now Tunisia. At the same time the Byzantine fleet besieged Barka in Cyrenaica. These actions for a brief period brought Arab rule in North Africa to an end.[57] Bede concludes this entry with the remark: 'and Carthage itself was captured by them [the Saracens] and destroyed'.[58] Bede's source for this additional bit of information has not been traced. It refers (we now know) to a time after 695; in fact, the capture of Carthage by the Arabs in

---

[54] The *Liber Pontificalis*, begun in the fifth or sixth century, was a haphazard compilation that was constantly being added to up to the ninth century. In the *Chronica maiora* Bede quotes from passages in the *Liber Pontificalis* for events as late as in the reign of the emperor Theodosius III (716–717).

[55] *De temporum ratione* (ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123B, 263–544), 66, lines 1880–81: 'Sarraceni Siciliam inuadunt et praeda nimia secum ablata mox Alexandriam redeunt'. Translation: F. Wallis, *Bede: The reckoning of time*, revised 2nd edition (Liverpool, 2004), 231. Each *Annus Mundi* date in the *Chronica maiora* is a terminal year (in the Sixth Age, the last year of a named emperor's reign). The events recorded under that date will have taken place sometime in the years since the previous entry. In the present case, A.M. 4639, the emperor Constantine is said to have ruled for 17 years. Therefore, as Bede reports it, the Saracen raid on Sicily could have occurred at any time between 667 and 684.

[56] *De temporum ratione*, 66, lines 1930–32: 'Hic constituit pacem cum Sarracenis decennio terra marique. Sed et prouincia Africa subiugata est Romano imperio ...'. Translation: Wallis, *Reckoning of Time*, 232.

[57] R. Collins, *Visigothic Spain 409–711* (Malden, MA; Oxford, 2004), 127; Lewis, *God's crucible*, 102–3.

[58] *De temporum ratione*, 66, lines 1932–3: 'ipsa quoque Carthagine ab eis capta et destructa'. Translation: Wallis, *Reckoning of Time*, 232.

698 marked the final end of Roman power in North Africa, and set the stage for the Arab–Berber invasion of Spain thirteen years later.[59]

Bede's third, longest, and most complex reference to the Saracens comprises the entirety of the final entry in the *Chronica maiora*. The entry, dated A.M. 4680 (725 CE), refers to the period of time between 717 and 725, during the rule of the Byzantine emperor, Leo the Isaurian. The entry consists of two separate statements, the sources for which have not been discovered. The first part records:

> The Saracens, coming to Constantinople with an immense army, besieged it for three years until, with the citizens calling on God on numerous occasions, many of [the Saracens] died of hunger, cold and pestilence, and withdrew, as if wearied of the siege. As they retreated, they started a war with the people of the Bulgars on the river Danube, and being likewise defeated by these people, they fled and sought their ships. When they were on the high sea, a storm suddenly blew up and many were killed when their ships were sunk or wrecked upon the shore.[60]

Bede's statement corresponds reasonably well to what we know of these events. The Arab siege of Constantinople actually lasted a little more than a year from the summer of 717 to the summer of 718. It was a combined assault by military and naval forces. The Arab army was crippled by disease and famine during the harsh winter of 717/718, and 'Greek fire' (a flammable material used as a weapon against ships) from the Byzantine fleet put the Arab fleet out of action. An attack on their rear by Leo's allies, the Bulgars, led the Arabs to raise the siege. A relieving Arab fleet, which in turn was mauled by the Byzantines, encountered damaging storms on its retreat.[61]

The second part of the entry registers Arab actions in the western Mediterranean: 'Hearing that the Saracens had depopulated Sardinia and had dug up the place where the bones of the holy Bishop Augustine [of Hippo] had once been moved on account of the barbarian raids and honourably

[59] Fletcher, *The Cross and the Crescent*, 14–15; R. Collins, *Early Medieval Europe, 300–1000*, 3rd edition (Basingstoke, 2010), 148.

[60] *De temporum ratione*, 66, lines 2052–60: 'Sarraceni cum inmenso exercitu Constantinopolim uenientes triennio ciuitatem obsident, donec ciuibus multa instantia ad Deum clamantibus plurimi eorum fame frigore pestilential perirent ac sic pertaesi obsidionis abscederent. Qui inde regressi Vulgarorum gentem, que est super Danubium, bello adgrediuntur; et ab hac quoque uicti refugiunt ac naues repetunt suas. Quibus cum altum peterent, ingruente subita tempestate plurimi etiam mersis siue confractis per litora nauibus sunt necati'. Translation: Wallis, *Reckoning of Time*, 236–7.

[61] Collins, *Early Medieval Europe*, 226; Lewis, *God's crucible*, 134–6.

buried, [the Lombard king] Liutprand sent and paid a great price [for them] and transported them to Pavia, and reburied them there with the honour due to so great a Father'.[62] We know that Catholic bishops, who were exiled from North Africa by the Arian Vandal Huneric, had carried Augustine's relics in the 430s to Cagliari in Sardinia. Arabs began raiding Sardinia as early as the second half of the seventh century and the raids continued for years.[63] Bede's account implies that the Saracens looted prominent memorials and held the contents for ransom.[64]

That Bede should end his *Chronica maiora* with these accounts of Saracen thrusts against Constantinople in the East and the western Mediterranean island of Sardinia is notable. Remarkably, there is no reference to the Arab advance up the Hispanic peninsula and across the Pyrenees toward the heart of western Europe, which might have been appropriately slotted in under any one of the final three entries. Indeed, there are no references to Spanish affairs in the chronicle at all, and as noted above Bede never mentions the Saracens in Spain in any of his works. Ten years after Bede's death, in a letter addressed to King Æthelbald of Mercia, the Anglo-Saxon missionary Boniface lamented the miseries suffered by the peoples of Spain, Provence and Burgundy at the hands of the Saracens.[65] This account appears to be the earliest extant reference by an Anglo-Saxon author to the Saracens' presence in Spain (Boniface was, of course, writing from the Continent).

---

[62] *De temporum ratione*, 66, lines 2061–6: 'Liudbrandus, audiens quod Sarraceni depopulata Sardinia etiam loca fedarent ulla, ubi ossa sancti Augustini episcopi propter uastationem barbarorum olim translata et honorifice fuerant condita, misit et dato magno praetio accepit et transtulit ea in Ticinis ibique cum debito tanto patri honore recondidit'. Translation: Wallis, *Reckoning of Time*, 237. Bede gives a similar account in his *Martyrologium*, which he composed after the *Chronica maiora* (725), but before the *Historia ecclesiastica* (731).

[63] S. Cosentino, 'Byzantine Sardinia between West and East: features of a regional culture', *Millennium: Jahrbuch zu Kultur und Geschichte des ersten Jahrtausends*, 1 (2004), 329–67, at 351–4.

[64] For a detailed study, see J.T. Hallenbeck, *The transferal of the relics of St. Augustine of Hippo from Sardinia to Pavia in the Early Middle Ages* (Lewiston, NY; Queenston, ON; Lampeter, 2000).

[65] R. Collins, *The Arab conquest of Spain: 710–797* (Oxford, 1989), 7; Scarfe Beckett, *Anglo-Saxon Perceptions*, 165.

Fears for the Future: the Saracens as a Negative 'Other'?

Well before Bede wrote the *Historia ecclesiastica* (731) the Saracens must have come to occupy in his mind an ominous, if uncertain, place in the providential history of the Sixth Age. A distinction between the Saracens and other barbarians that might have occurred to him was that the Saracens, as an Abrahamic tribe descended from Ishmael, were already part of providential history, in a way that other barbarians were not. What role, then, did they play? What did they symbolise or foreshadow? Such questions implicitly insert the Saracens into a religious framework, where they could be seen as a negative 'Other', a dark counterpart to the light of Christianity. The extent to which Bede's analysis of the Saracens contributed to the development of such a view in later European thought is impossible to say, but he was beyond doubt the first to lay a theoretical allegorical foundation that could support it.

Bede terminated *In Genesim* with the exile of Hagar and Ishmael into the desert. They were cast out, separated from the line of the chosen people that led to Christ. The Saracens, as descendants of Ishmael, had been exiled literally; the non-Christian Jews of the Sixth Age, spiritually. But what of the future? Bede's anxiety on this subject may, I suspect, have led to an evasion – a critical silence – on his part. He concluded his commentary at the dramatic moment when Sarah demanded that Abraham cast out Hagar and Ishmael (Genesis 21.10). By stopping at this verse, he necessarily could not comment on God's consolation to Abraham and Hagar that immediately followed. God said to Abraham: 'But I will make [Ishmael] the son ... of the bondwoman a great nation [*in gentem magnam*], because he is your seed' (Genesis 21.13), and again to Hagar: 'Arise, take up the boy, and hold him by the hand: for I will make him a great nation' (Genesis 21.18). This phrase, *in gentem magnam* in the Vulgate, ought seemingly to apply to the Saracens, the heirs of Ishmael, who had now seized the greater part of the world. The adjective *magnus* in Latin has much the same connotations as the adjective 'great' does in English: that is, large or great in size, in importance, in power, in influence, in worth. What could be the significance of God's promise, so different in tone and implication from his earlier pronouncement, 'He shall be a wild man: his hand will be against all men, and all men's hands against him' (Genesis 16.12)? The question must have troubled Bede, and just as he avoided addressing it here by ending his commentary where he did, so he silently passed over an earlier opportunity to take it up. In one of those curious doublings that one finds in Genesis, the story of the casting out of Hagar and Ishmael is effectively told twice. In the first version, it happens when Hagar is pregnant with Ishmael; she is afflicted by Sarai and runs off into the desert. God

persuades her to return (Genesis 16.1–16). Then (after Abram and Sarai are renamed Abraham and Sarah), God gives the same promise to Abraham that he will later give after the second exile: 'And as for Ishmael I have also heard you. Behold, I will bless him, and increase, and multiply him exceedingly: he shall beget twelve chiefs, and I will make him a great nation [*in gentem magnam*]' (Genesis 17.20). But in *In Genesim*, having commented on the previous verse (Genesis 17.19), Bede skips down to Genesis 17.24–5, again side-stepping the opportunity to consider the implications of God's blessing and promise to make Ishmael a great nation.

Bede's silence in regard to God's twice-repeated blessing and promise suggests that he had not made up his mind about the ultimate place of the Saracens in God's plan for the end-times. They do not fit comfortably into the threefold scheme of world history in the Sixth Age that he formulated in *De tabernaculo* (*c.* 721–725): 'after the Lord's ascension the primitive Church was gathered from Israel, now it is gathered from the Gentiles, and at the end of the world it will be gathered from the remnants of Israel'.[66] By concluding *In Genesim* with the exile of Ishmael, Bede dramatically highlighted two roads stretching out from the biblical narrative to his modern world: the one, leading to the Church, that would be taken by the seed of Isaac, the Israelites, and the other, leading to the Church's adversaries, that would be taken by the Ishmaelites, the Saracens.

Bede's belief that small numbers of Jews were beginning to convert to Christianity in his own day contributed to his perception that the period of Gentile conversion was in its last stages, the prelude to the salvation of the Jews at the end of time.[67] But if the Saracens, who, Bede's words might suggest, had taken over the greater part of the world, were counted among the Gentiles, the process of conversion, far from being nearly complete, would appear to be a work in its earliest stages – apocalypse postponed. The equally uncomfortable alternative would seem to be to conflate the Saracens allegorically with the Jews, the (righteous) remnants of whom were to be converted at the end of the world.

In the final historical chapter of the *Historia ecclesiastica*, Bede mentions a reverse suffered by the Saracens in Gaul. Bede begins his narrative with an ominous celestial event:

---

[66] *De tabernaculo* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A, 5–139), 1, lines 1115–18: '... post ascensionem dominicam congregata est ecclesia primitiua de Israhel congregatur nunc de gentibus congreganda est in fine mundi de reliquiis Israhel'. Translation: A. Holder, *Bede: On the Tabernacle* (Liverpool, 1994), 36. Cited, with insightful commentary, by Darby, *Bede and the end of time*, 200.

[67] Darby, *Bede and the end of time*, 201.

> In the year of our Lord 729 two comets appeared around the sun, striking great terror into all beholders. One of them preceded the sun as it rose in the morning and the other followed it as it set at night, seeming to portend dire disaster to east and west alike. One comet was the forerunner of the day and the other of the night, to indicate that mankind was threatened by calamities both by day and by night. They had fiery torch-like trains which faced northwards as if poised to start a fire. They appeared in the month of January and remained for almost a fortnight. At this time a terrible plague [*lues*] of Saracens ravaged Gaul with cruel bloodshed and not long afterwards they suffered [*luebant*] the merited penalty of their faithlessness in the same kingdom.[68]

Translation somewhat obscures the ominous prophetic significance of the comets. The comet preceding the rising (*orientem*) sun portends disaster to the east (*Orienti*); that following the setting (*occidentem*) sun, disaster to the west (*Occidenti*). Their tails seem to threaten the north (Britain? Northumbria?) with fiery destruction.

The plague of Saracens unquestionably qualifies as a disaster. The phonetic echo *lues/luebant*, suggesting that the plague turned on itself, is typical, serious Bedan wordplay.[69] Possibly he thought of this disaster as occurring in the east (Gaul) as opposed to those calamities he goes on to mention in the west (the misadventures of Ceolwulf in Britain). But I think it more likely that he had in mind the Saracen conquests in Asia on the borders of Byzantium and in North Africa (the east), as well as the Saracen plague in Gaul and troubles in Britain (the west).

It is tempting to assume that this much discussed passage is a reference to the Battle of Poitiers (traditionally dated October 12, 732) at which Charles Martel, the Frankish Mayor of the Palace, along with Odo [Eudo], the Duke of Aquitaine, famously stopped the advance of the Muslims into Western Europe

---

[68] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.23: 'Anno dominicae incarnationis DCCXXVIIII apparuerunt cometae duae circa solem, multum intuentibus terrorem incutientes. Vna quippe solem praecedebat mane orientem, altera uespere sequebatur occidentem, quasi Orienti simul et Occidenti dirae cladis praesagae; uel certe una diei, altera nocits praecurrebat exortum, ut utroque tempore mala mortalibus inminere signarent. Portabant autem facem ignis contra aquilonem, quasi ad accendendum adclinem, apparebantque mense Ianuario et duabus ferme septimanis permanebant. Quo tempore grauissima Sarracenorum lues Gallias misera caede uastabat, et ipsi non multo post in eadem prouincia dignas suae perfidiae poenas luebant'. Translation: B. Colgrave and R.A.B Mynors, *BEH*, 557. I have altered the translation of the last sentence.

[69] On *paronomasia* (wordplay) in Bede, see C.B. Kendall, 'Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*: the rhetoric of faith', in *Medieval eloquence: studies in the theory and practice of medieval rhetoric*, ed. J.J. Murphy (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, 1978), 145–72.

and turned the tide of history. However, as Charles Plummer long ago pointed out, if the penalty the Saracens suffered refers to their defeat outside of Poitiers, Bede must have inserted the sentence about the Saracens after the completion of the *Historia ecclesiastica* in 731.[70] Although at first blush this explanation sounds plausible, the theory of interpolation presents difficulties. A minor objection is stylistic. If the 'interpolated' sentence is excised, what was a dramatic paragraph is sadly deflated. The only 'disasters' left to be foretold by those portentous comets would be the deaths of St Ecgberht and King Osric of Northumbria, and the accession to the Northumbrian throne in 729 of Ceolwulf, the king to whom Bede dedicated his *History*.

A stronger objection to the interpolation theory is both logical and temporal. Colgrave observes that the insertion would likely have been added 'while the first copies were being made in the Wearmouth-Jarrow scriptoria'.[71] News of a battle that took place near Poitiers in mid-October of 732 would probably not reach Northumbria at the earliest until some time in 733. Even allowing for the fact that this event would have been recorded on the final folios of a long manuscript, the copying of which might have extended over a period of months, it seems doubtful that a work completed in 731 would take more than a year to be readied for 'publication'.[72] The problem is compounded if, as some scholars now believe, the battle of Poitiers actually took place toward the end of 733 or even as late as October of the following year.[73] And we might reasonably wonder why, if Bede thought that an event that took place after 731 was important enough to warrant inclusion in his *History*, he did not simply alter the terminal date of his opus in the final paragraph.

All that can safely be said is that vague news reached Bede (probably before 731) of a more or less recent Arab raid somewhere in Gaul, which was followed by some kind of a setback.[74] The important point is that, although Bede

---

[70] Plummer, *VBOH*, II, 339; J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People: A historical commentary* (Oxford, 1988), 199.

[71] Colgrave and Mynors, *BEH*, 557, n. 5.

[72] Heavy demand for the works of Bede in his own lifetime was responsible for rapid copying by multiple scribes at Wearmouth-Jarrow, as M.B. Parkes, *The scriptorium of Wearmouth-Jarrow* (Jarrow Lecture, 1982), 555–86, has shown.

[73] Collins, *Arab conquest of Spain*, 90–91, summarises the evidence and concludes on balance that the battle 'should be placed in late (October?) 733'. R. Fletcher, *Moorish Spain* (paperback reprint, Berkeley, CA, 2006), 26, says of the battle that it is 'traditionally dated 732, but 733 looks more likely'. Lewis, *God's crucible*, 160–61, defends the traditional date.

[74] History records several Arab campaigns into Frankish territories in the 720s. Following his capture in 720 of the last Visigothic stronghold, Narbonne, the Arab governor As-Samh (r. 718–721) turned west into southern Aquitaine and undertook the siege of Toulouse. As-Samh

studiously avoids overt allegorical interpretation of the historical events that he records, he employs the comets of 729 as a structural device to encourage his audience to reflect on the significance of the Saracen threat in God's plan for the final period of human history.

In retrospect, the fact that Bede chose to terminate both his works of broad historical import, the *Chronica maiora* and the *Historia ecclesiastica*, with accounts of Saracen assaults on different quarters of Christian Europe (Constantinople, Sardinia, Gaul) is striking. Bede's allegorical exegesis of Ishmaelites/Saracens in *In primam partem Samuhelis* and *In Genesim* provided the basis for coming to grips with the meaning of these developments, but the ambiguities that this exegesis generated must have been disquieting. The Saracens, who by synecdoche were the Ishmaelites of the modern world, were the biological descendants of Hagar and Ishmael, the elder son, whereas the Jews were the biological descendants of Sarah and Isaac, the younger son. But, invoking St Paul, Bede explained how, spiritually, 'Hagar and Ishmael signify the Synagogue and the Old Covenant, just as Sarah and her son Isaac signify the Church and the New Covenant'.[75] This reversal of polarities enabled Bede to align the Saracens with the despised Jews.[76]

It is tempting, but ultimately futile, to speculate, on the basis of his exegetical methods, about Bede's possible interpretations of God's blessing of Ishmael in relation to the Saracen assaults on the Christian world. He regarded history as the unfolding of God's plan, but he was always careful not to forecast the future. In any case, his European audience would shortly have other, more immediate concerns. By a curious quirk of fate, his account of a Saracen setback in Gaul at the end of the *Historia ecclesiastica* coincided with the high-water mark of the Arab/Berber drive through the Iberian Peninsula into Western Europe. The Arab threat receded; it was overshadowed in the next several centuries by Viking raids from the north. Not until the time of the First Crusade did the

---

was killed and his force defeated in 721 by an Aquitanian army led by Duke Odo. Anbasa, As-Samh's successor, took Carcassonne, perhaps in 724, then occupied Nîmes and turned north up the Rhône. It seems to have been sometime during the Arab capture and sack of Autun in Burgundy in 725 that Anbasa died, apparently of natural causes, after which the Arab army withdrew (Wallace-Hadrill, *A Commentary*, 199; Collins, *Arab conquest of Spain*, 48–9; 87–8; Lewis, *God's crucible*, 156–9).

[75] *Libri quattuor in principium Genesis*, 4, lines 208–11: 'De Agar et Ismahel quomodo synagogam et uetus testamentum designent, sicut Sarra et Isaac filius eius ecclesiam ac nouum testamentum, apostolus ad Galatas plenissime disseruit'. Translation: Kendall, *On Genesis*, 278; *cf.* Galatians 4.22–31.

[76] Bede uses the term 'Jews' pejoratively, in contrast to the 'people of Israel', or 'Hebrews'. See Kendall, *On Genesis*, 25–6.

'Saracens' re-emerge in the European imagination as the demonic adversaries of Christendom.

Bede left attentive readers of his works with an intimation of a bi-polar world, fractured geographically by religion. This was not, to reiterate, a picture of Christianity versus Islam, of which he knew nothing, but rather of the true faith in a shrinking area of Europe menaced by an ill-defined, fierce, hostile, mighty force both in the East and in the West – a force characterised by unbelief, idolatry and heresy, but nevertheless, mysteriously, a recipient of God's promise of greatness. Bede's works continued to be widely copied and read into the twelfth century and beyond.[77] Despite his ignorance of Islam, his identification of the 'Saracens' of his day, the Muslim invaders of Palestine, Syria, Egypt, North Africa and Gaul, the besiegers of Constantinople and despoilers of Sicily and Sardinia, with Jerome's fierce pre-Islamic tribe of desert thieves, supposed to be Ishmaelites, the descendants of the bondwoman Hagar, and his introduction of this identification into biblical exegesis helped lay, however inadvertently, a theoretical foundation for Western misperceptions of Islam that emerged in the later Middle Ages and persist in some quarters to the present day.[78]

[77] J.A. Westgard, 'Bede and the Continent in the Carolingian Age and beyond', in S. DeGregorio, *The Cambridge companion to Bede* (Cambridge, 2010), 201–15; esp. 210–13.

[78] Southern, *Western views of Islam*, 17.

Chapter 5
Bede's History of the Future[1]

Peter Darby

In 725, ten years before his death, Bede issued *De temporum ratione*, a comprehensive survey of the subject of time reckoning.[2] In the very first lines of the preface to that work, which address his abbot Hwætberht, Bede explains that he had undertaken the project to satisfy his monastic colleagues at Wearmouth and Jarrow:

> Some time ago I wrote two short books in a summary style which were, I judged, necessary for my students; these concerned the nature of things and the reckoning of time.[3] When I undertook to present and explain them to some of my brethren, they said that they were much more concise than they would have wished, especially the book on time, which was, it seems, rather more in demand because of the calculation of Easter. So they persuaded me to discuss certain matters concerning the nature, course and end of time at greater length. I yielded to their enthusiasm, and after surveying the writings of the venerable Fathers, I wrote a longer book on time.[4]

[1] I would like to thank: Máirín Mac Carron, James T. Palmer and my co-editor Faith Wallis for providing helpful feedback on an earlier draft of this piece; and the British Academy, for funding the period of postdoctoral research in which this essay was written.

[2] 725 is given as the *annus praesens* in *De temporum ratione* (ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123B, 263–544), 49, 52 and 58.

[3] This statement refers to the short tracts *De natura rerum* and *De temporibus*, which were issued concurrently in the year 703.

[4] *De temporum ratione*, preface, lines 1–9: 'De natura rerum et ratione temporum duos quondam stricto sermone libellos discentibus ut rebar necessarios composui. Quos, cum fratribus quibusdam dare atque exponere coepissem, dicebant eos breuius multo digestos esse quam uellent, maxime ille de temporibus cuius propter rationem paschae potius uidebatur usus indigere; suadebantque mihi latius aliqua de temporum statu, cursu, ac fine disserere. Quibus concitus parens, perspectis patrum uenerabilium scriptis, prolixiorem de temporibus librum edidi'. Translation: F. Wallis, *Bede: The reckoning of time*, revised 2nd edition (Liverpool, 2004), 3.

This statement identifies 'the nature, course and the end of time' (*temporum statu, cursu, ac fine*) as the three major themes of *De temporum ratione*. Issued in 703, Bede's first book on time (which is known by the title *De temporibus*) had briefly covered the first two of these topics but it had said almost nothing about eschatology, the part of theology concerned with the Second Coming of Christ, the Last Judgement and the end of the world.[5] The final five chapters of *De temporum ratione* (67–71) set out Bede's eschatological expectations in scrupulous detail.

The preface to *De temporum ratione* twice acknowledges Bede's debt to the writings of others (*patrum uenerabilium scriptis / ueterum scriptis*).[6] Bede often styled his own work as a synthesis of earlier sources, and his presentation of *De temporum ratione* as a gathering together of material from several different ancient texts is in the same spirit as the familiar refrain that he was 'following in the footsteps of the Fathers' (*patrum vestigia sequens*).[7] A great deal of recent scholarship has rightly emphasised the originality of Bede's intellectual programme and elsewhere, as here in *De temporum ratione*, Bede's seemingly modest self-appraisal of his own contribution belies a more complex reality.[8] *De temporum ratione* is presented as an attempt to channel a common set of beliefs about the reckoning of time into a single volume, but although Bede describes his project in these relatively simple terms, *De temporum ratione* was a carefully crafted piece of scholarship underpinned by a considerable amount of critical thought and a great deal of technical skill.[9] This is especially true of its eschatological material which boldly attempts to bring clarity to an area

[5] The text does not engage with this theme until its very last sentence, a brief statement that 'the remainder of the sixth age is known only to God'. *De temporibus* (ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123C, 585–611), 22, line 80: 'Reliquum sextae aetatis deo soli patet'.

[6] *De temporum ratione*, preface, lines 8–9 and 44–7.

[7] Variants of the expression *patrum vestigia sequens* are used by Bede to describe his own work at: *In Cantica Canticorum* (ed. J.E. Hudson, CCSL 119B, 381–409), prologue, line 503 and 6, lines 4–5; *In primam partem Samuhelis* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119, 5–287), prologue, lines 53–4; *In Regum librum xxx quaestiones* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119, 293–322), prologue, line 23; *De temporum ratione*, 5, line 86; *Homeliarum euangelii libri ii* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 122, 1–378), 2.11, lines 191–2; *De templo* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A, 143–234), prologue, lines 54–5 and 1, lines 1753–4; *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum* (ed. M.L.W. Laistner, CCSL 121, 3–99), preface, lines 9–10. The phrase is reminiscent of 1 Peter 2.21: 'Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his footsteps' (*Christus passus est pro vobis vobis relinquens exemplum ut sequamini vestigia eius*).

[8] See especially the essays in: S. DeGregorio (ed.), *Innovation and tradition in the writings of the Venerable Bede* (Morgantown, WV, 2006).

[9] F. Wallis, '*Si naturam quaeras*: re-framing Bede's science', in *Innovation and tradition*, ed. DeGregorio, 65–100, at 69–70.

of patristic thought beset with uncertainty and contradictions.[10] This essay examines the consolidated eschatological programme, or 'history of the future', presented in the final chapters of *De temporum ratione*, and it explains how that programme complements and overlaps with Bede's historical interests. The phrase 'history of the future' is borrowed from an essay by Paul Magdalino on Byzantine eschatological traditions; it will become evident that the term is especially appropriate to Bede.[11]

Ordering the Future

The prophetic material scattered throughout the Bible does not present a uniform account of what is expected to happen at the end of time; there is broad agreement that the present age will end with an act of judgement but it is not clear exactly how that event will unfold or what will happen immediately before it. In the early fifth century, St Augustine of Hippo (354–430) and his contemporary St Jerome (*c.* 347–*c.* 420) approached the task of untangling the eschatological prophecies of the Scriptures with great care: Augustine devoted the twentieth book of *De civitate Dei*, the longest and most comprehensive of his many works, to the Day of Judgement and the time immediately preceding it; Jerome engaged with these themes in commentaries on the Old Testament books of Isaiah and Daniel, the latter of which is much concerned with the career of Antichrist. Augustine and Jerome both expressed serious reservations about contemporary attempts to calculate the timing of the Second Coming, especially those based upon the assumption that universal history was divided into epochs of exactly one thousand years each. Jerome pleaded for 'the fable of the thousand years' (*mille annorum fabula*) to end, whilst Augustine ordered those who made apocalyptic predictions to stop calculating with the following statement: 'Relax your fingers and give them rest ... It is not for you to know the times which the

[10] There is a vast literature on patristic and early-medieval eschatology. For an overview of the patristic period see: C.E. Hill, *Regnum caelorum: patterns of millennial thought in Early Christianity*, revised 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, MI, 2001). For the Middle Ages: B. McGinn, *Visions of the End: apocalyptic traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York, NY, 1979); J.T. Palmer, *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge, forthcoming).

[11] P. Magdalino, 'The history of the future and its uses: prophecy, policy and propaganda', in *The making of Byzantine History*, eds R. Beaton and C. Roueché (Aldershot, 1993), 3–34, reprinted with postscript in J. Shepard (ed.), *The expansion of Orthodox Europe: Byzantium, the Balkans and Russia* (Aldershot, 2007), 29–64.

Father has placed under his own power'.[12] Both men rejected the notion that the timing of the end of the world could be foreknown,[13] but Augustine and Jerome were nevertheless interested in the idea that a predetermined set of events would unfold at the end of the present age. In his popular and influential exegesis of the Book of Daniel, Jerome outlined an elaborate end-time scenario grounded in a Rome-centred view of the world which we will return to later. In the very last chapter of Book 20 of *De civitate Dei* (20.30), Augustine summarised his own thoughts on the eschatological future as follows:

> At that [Last] Judgment, or near the time of that Judgment, we have learned that the following things will come to pass: Elijah the Tishbite will come; the Jews will believe; Antichrist will persecute; Christ will judge; the dead will rise; the good will be separated from the wicked; the world will be destroyed by fire and renewed. We must believe that all these things will come to pass. But how and in what order they are to do so we shall learn by experience of the events themselves when the time comes. This is something that, at the present time, the human intellect cannot manage to teach us. My own belief, however, is that they will happen in the order in which I have here stated them.[14]

Augustine proffered this programme cautiously, but it is clear that he thought it was permissible to at least speculate about what would happen at the end of time, if not when the end would eventually come. This statement from *De civitate Dei* outlines a scheme for the last days which Wallis terms a 'preconditions narrative of eschatology', in which the arrival of the Day of Judgement is preceded by a series of extraordinary one-off future events.[15] Bede was profoundly influenced by the writings of Augustine and this passage is an important frame of reference

---

[12] Jerome, *In Danielem* (ed. F. Glorie, CCSL 75A), lines 713–14: '... cessat ergo mille annorum fabula'. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 18.53, lines 21–4 (drawing on Acts 1.7): 'Omnium uero de hac re calculantium digitos resoluit et quiescere iubet ille, qui dicit: non est uestrum scire tempora, quae pater posuit in sua potestate'.

[13] *Cf.* Matthew 24.36–44; Mark 13.32–7.

[14] Augustine, *De civitate Dei* (eds B. Dombart and A. Kalb, CCSL 47, 48), 20.30, lines 165–74: 'in illo itaque iudicio uel circa illud iudicium has res didicimus esse uenturas, helian thesbiten, fidem iudaeorum, antichristum persecuturum, christum iudicaturum, mortuorum resurrectionem, bonorum malorumque diremptionem, mundi conflagrationem eiusdemque renouationem. quae omnia quidem uentura esse credendum est; sed quibus modis et quo ordine ueniant, magis tunc docebit rerum experientia, quam nunc ad perfectum hominum intellegentia ualet consequi. existimo tamen eo quo a me commemorata sunt ordine esse uentura'. Translation: R.W. Dyson, *Augustine: The City of God against the pagans* (Cambridge, 1998), 1042–3.

[15] F. Wallis, *Bede: Commentary on Revelation* (Liverpool, 2013), 76–8.

for the eschatological treatise presented in the final five chapters of *De temporum ratione* (67–71).[16]

That treatise begins with two introductory chapters which channel Augustine to stress that the timing of the end of the world is unknowable.[17] Chapter 69 outlines the following set of expectations for the future: Enoch and Elijah will return to preach for three and a half years; through their ministry the Jews will be converted to the Christian faith; the prophets will become the first martyrs of the persecution of Antichrist, a phase that is expected to last for a further three and a half years; at the death of Antichrist there will be a test of patience for the saints immediately prior to the Day of Judgement. A diagram of the sequence for the end-times described by Bede in *De temporum ratione* is given in Figure 1. *De temporum ratione* 70 contains a lengthy discussion of matters relating to the Final Judgement (such as: what the extent of the damage caused by the Judgement-day fire will be; what will happen to the sea at that time; whether it will take place in the air or on earth).[18] The final chapter of *De temporum ratione*, Chapter 71, describes the joyous afterlife to be experienced by the elect in a post-Judgement age of perpetual bliss.[19]

The overarching structure of Bede's eschatological future owes a clear debt to the sequence summarised by Augustine in *De civitate Dei* 20.30: both men thought that the Day of Judgement would be preceded by the return of Elijah, the conversion of the Jews and a period of persecution by Antichrist (in that particular order). There are, however, two key differences between the

---

[16] A.T. Thacker, *Bede and Augustine of Hippo: history and figure in sacred text* (Jarrow Lecture, 2005) offers a comprehensive survey of the relationship between Augustine and Bede. A list of Bede's borrowings from the writings of Augustine is collated in: M. Lapidge, *The Anglo-Saxon library* (Oxford, 2006), 196–204; the number of citations from Augustine dwarves that of any other patristic author.

[17] *De temporum ratione*, 67, 'On the remainder of the sixth age' (*De reliquis sextae aetatis*), reiterates the position set out in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* of 708 that it is heretical to speculate about the year of the apocalypse. *De temporum ratione*, 68, 'On three opinions of the faithful as to when the Lord will come' (*De trina opinatione fidelium, quando veniat dominus*), reproduces a long statement from Augustine's letter to Hesychius (*Epistola* 199) which expresses the view that the return of Christ should be keenly hoped for but not predicted.

[18] *De temporum ratione*, 70, lines 4–34 (extent of destruction in final conflagration, *cf. De tabernaculo*, 2, lines 1195–207; *In epistulas septem catholicas*, *In epistolam II Petri*, 3, lines 38–48 and 110–25); 39–45 (fate of the sea); 45–63 (location of the final judgement).

[19] Bede chose to define the eternal afterlife of the righteous as an eighth world age (*aetas saeculi*). The idea is grounded in Augustinian theology, and owes a clear debt to the 'eternal octave' (*octavus aeternus*) described in the very final chapter of *De civitate Dei* (22.30). The concept features in many of Bede's mature writings; see further: P.N. Darby, *Bede and the end of time* (Farnham, 2012), 65–91.

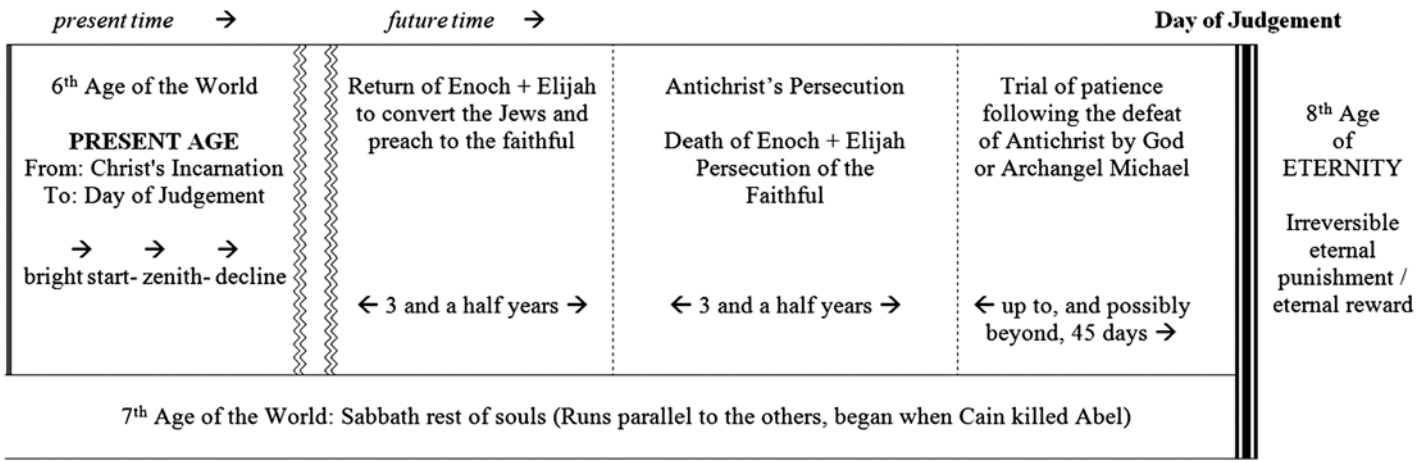

Figure 1 Bede's 'End-time Sequence' (from: Darby, *Bede and the End of Time*, 225).

Augustinian view and the scheme presented in *De temporum ratione* 69. First, Bede's eschatological programme is presented in a more determinative manner than Augustine's. Augustine was keen to point out that the sequence described in *De civitate Dei* represented his own personal opinion, and he expressed the view that matters relating to the last days are shrouded in divine mystery even to the point where they may be beyond human comprehension. In contrast, Bede confidently proclaimed that the coming of the Day of Judgement is to be announced by two 'very certain indicators' (*duo ... certissima ... indicia*), the conversion of the Jewish people and the time of Antichrist, and he was prepared to imply that the information that he was providing represented a set of beliefs shared universally throughout the Church.[20] Augustine offered an end-time scenario qualified by caveats but Bede presented his readership with an ordered narrative grounded in a firm sense of historicity which was made up of an irreversible series of clearly defined future events.

The second major difference between the end-time sequence outlined in *De temporum ratione* and the summary given in *De civitate Dei* is that Bede adds some additional details to the Augustinian framework: Bede's scheme contains an additional phase to allow time for the patience of the saints to be tested after the death of Antichrist; also, Bede gives Enoch a clearly defined role as Elijah's end-time companion, a concept not found in *De civitate Dei* but which was a common theme in early-medieval Christian thought.[21] Bede would have encountered both of these ideas in his reading. Gregory the Great (d. 604) expressed the view that Enoch will return with Elijah in his *Moralia in Iob*, a

[20] *De temporum ratione*, 66, lines 2–4: 'Duo sane certissima necdum instantis diei iudicii habemus indicia, fidem uidelicet israheliticae gentis et regnum persecutionemque antichristi'. In what follows (at lines 4–5), Bede says that the 'faith of the Church' holds the view that the persecution of Antichrist will last for three and a half years: '... quam uidelicet persecutionem trium semis annorum futurum fides ecclesiae tenet'.

[21] R.J. Bauckham, 'The martyrdom of Enoch and Elijah: Jewish or Christian?' *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 95 (1976), 447–58. The return of Enoch and Elijah is expected in the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, a tract originally written in Syriac in the late seventh century and subsequently translated first into Greek and then into Latin. The Latin version was known in the West within a few decades of Bede's death. The prophets play a different role in the Pseudo-Methodian end-time scenario, returning to shame Antichrist during the period of persecution rather than preach to the Jews: Pseudo-Methodius (translation by Petrus Monachus), *Sermo de regnum gentium et in novissimis temporibus certa demonstratio* (eds J. Aerts and G.A.A. Kortekaas, *Die Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius*), 14. On the history of the Latin Pseudo-Methodius see James T. Palmer's forthcoming monograph *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages*; my thanks to Dr Palmer for allowing me to read his work on this subject in advance of its publication.

text which Bede knew intimately and cited often.[22] The concept of a test of patience was employed by Jerome to explain the 45-day discrepancy between the 1,290 days of desolation foretold in the prophecy of Daniel (which Jerome interpreted as a reference to the Time of Antichrist) and a subsequent statement that 'Blessed is the one who waits for and comes to the end of the 1,335 days'.[23] Bede's end-time sequence did not overtly contradict Augustine's vision for the future but it supplemented that vision with additional details gathered in from elsewhere; it was not taken over wholly from Gregory or Jerome either, instead it aligned ideas that Bede inherited from each of them. Each stage of Bede's sequence was profoundly influenced by a process of critical engagement with the theological perspectives of the Latin Fathers, perspectives which he examined rigorously, weighed and balanced against one another and shaped into a new statement of faith.

Ordering the Past

The careful work that Bede did to establish the sequence of the future in the final chapters of *De temporum ratione* has something in common with the methodologies employed in the construction of the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*, a text which sets out the course of early-English history from the arrival of Julius Caesar in Britain to the present day (731), and the *Chronica maiora*, a lengthy world chronicle incorporated into the main text of *De temporum ratione* at Chapter 66.[24] Each of these three histories concern

[22] Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob* (ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL 143, 143A, 143B), 14.23.27, lines 6–12; also *Homiliae in Hiezechielem prophetam* (ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL 142), 1.12, lines 106–16. For Bede's knowledge of both of these works, see: Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon library*, 209–11. A letter of Augustine's to a correspondent of his named Mercator mentioned the idea that Elijah will return with Enoch as a widely held view, although not one that Augustine necessarily subscribed to himself: *Epistula* 193 (ed. A. Goldbacher, CSEL 57, 167–75).

[23] Daniel 12.11–12 (Vulgate: ed. B. Fischer, J. Gribomont, H.F.D. Sparks, W. Thiele and R. Weber, *Biblia sacra iuxta Uulgatam uersionem*): 'a tempore cum ablatum fuerit iuge sacrificium et posita fuerit abominatio in desolatione dies mille ducenti nonaginta; beatus qui expectat et pervenit ad dies mille trecentos triginta quinque'.

[24] After the preface, the first chapter of Book 1 of the *Historia ecclesiastica* describes the topography of the islands of Britain and Ireland. Caesar's campaign in Britain in *c.* 60 BCE is the first event to feature in the historical narrative proper: *Historia ecclesiastica* (eds B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors, *BEH*), 1.2. The year 731 is given as the *annus prasesns* in 5.23. The *Historia ecclesiastica* must have occupied Bede for a considerable amount of time before it was finished and he probably worked on it sporadically throughout the mid- to late-720s, perhaps even longer. The

different aspects of the Bedan vision of time, but they were all put together after a process of critical engagement with an array of different materials; in each case, that process required Bede to make value judgements about the veracity of his sources, resolve conflicts between them and include or omit content as he saw fit. The *Historia ecclesiastica* and *Chronica maiora* perform different functions,[25] and they use separate methods of dating in order to serve their distinct purposes: the *Chronica maiora* employs an *Annus Mundi* framework (which dates historical events relative to the amount of time thought to have elapsed since the creation of the world) to reflect its wide chronological time-span and broad geographical coverage; the *Historia ecclesiastica* utilises an *Annus Domini* system of dating in which time is reckoned in relation to Christ, a choice which marks out the story of the conversion of the English as a self-contained narrative which is anchored to the Incarnation, for Bede the pivotal moment in world history and the starting point for the sixth (and final) era of historical time.

There was no comprehensive account of the conversion of the English available to Bede when he embarked upon the *Historia ecclesiastica*, and he had to construct much of the chronological spine for the early history of Anglo-Saxon England himself.[26] Bede's decision to anchor the *Historia ecclesiastica* around an *Annus Domini* system of reckoning had important theological implications, as Mac Carron's essay in this volume demonstrates, but it also presented Bede with the practical problem of having to assign *Annus Domini* dates to many major events in the history of the English Church for the very first time.[27] Where firm dating clues were few and far between, or where it was necessary to synchronise several different methods of dating into one system, Bede had to come to a judgement about how best to arrange the different elements of his narrative into a coherent and absolute *Annus Domini* sequence.

---

preface reveals that Ceolwulf had read an earlier draft of the text; Bede submitted the final version to him 'for copying and further study' (*ad transcribendum ac plenius ex tempore meditandum*).

[25] On the *Historia ecclesiastica* and *Chronica maiora* as overlapping, although distinct historical projects see: R.A. Markus, *Bede and the tradition of ecclesiastical historiography* (Jarrow Lecture, 1975).

[26] P.H. Blair, *The world of Bede*, revised 2nd edition (Cambridge, 1990), 268–70; W. Levison, 'Bede as historian', in *Bede, his life, times, and writings*, ed. A. Hamilton Thompson (Oxford, 1935), 111–51 at 132–51; K. Harrison, *The framework of Anglo-Saxon history to AD 900* (Cambridge, 1976), 76–98.

[27] On the theological ideas conveyed by Bede's adoption of AD dating, see Chapter 7 below. On the practical challenges that Bede faced, see further: M. Mac Carron, 'Bede, *Annus Domini* and the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*', in *The mystery of Christ in the Fathers of the Church*, eds J.E. Rutherford and D. Woods (Dublin, 2012), 116–34.

An insight into the nature of the task that Bede faced in compiling the *Historia ecclesiastica* is offered in its preface, which lists some of the sources that Bede had at his disposal. He first highlights the important contribution made by his principal informant Albinus, abbot of the monastery of St Peter and St Paul at Canterbury (d. 733 or 734):

> He [Albinus] carefully ascertained, from written records or from the old traditions, all that the disciples of St Gregory [the Great] had done in the kingdom of Kent or in the neighbouring kingdoms. He passed on to me whatever seemed worth remembering through Nothhelm, a godly priest of the Church in London, either in writing or by word of mouth. Afterwards Nothhelm went to Rome and got permission from the present Pope Gregory [II] to search through the archives of the holy Roman Church and there found some letters of St Gregory and of other popes. On the advice of Father Albinus he brought them to us on his return to be included in our *History*.[28] So from the period at which this volume begins to the time when the English race accepted the faith of Christ, I have obtained my material from here and there, chiefly from the writings of earlier writers.[29]

There follows a lengthy description of the materials that Bede drew upon for his account of the period from the acceptance of Christ to the present day. These sources can be summarised as follows: Albinus and Nothhelm supplied information about the conversion of Kent, the succession of bishops and kings in East Anglia, Northumbria and the territory of the East and West Saxons; Daniel, the contemporary bishop of the West Saxons (d. 745), provided written accounts of the history of the Church in his own region, Sussex and the Isle of Wight; information relating to the conversion of the Mercians and the East

---

[28] Papal letters are incorporated into the main text of the *Historia ecclesiastica* at: 1.23–24 and 1.27–32 (letters of Gregory the Great); 2.8 and 2.10–11 (Boniface V); 2.17–18 (Honorius I); 3.29 (Vitalian I). On Bede's knowledge and use of the Gregorian letters see: R.A. Markus, 'The chronology of the Gregorian Mission to England: Bede's narrative and Gregory's correspondence', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 14 (1963), 16–30; P. Meyvaert, 'The Registrum of Gregory the Great and Bede', *Revue Bénédictine*, 80 (1970), 162–6. On the document brought to Northumbria from Rome by Nothhelm, see: J. Story, 'Bede, Willibrord and the letters of Pope Honorius I on the genesis of the archbishopric of York', *English Historical Review*, 127 (2012), 783–818.

[29] *Historia ecclesiastica*, preface: 'Institutus diligenter omnia, quae in ipsa Cantuariorum prouincia uel etiam in contiguis eidem regionibus a discipulis beati papae Gregorii gesta fuere, uel monimentis litterarum uel seniorum traditione cognouerat, et ea mihi de his quae memoria digna uidebantur per religiosum Lundoniensis ecclesiae presbyterum Nothelmum, siue litteris mandata siue ipsius Nothelmi uiua uoce referenda, transmisit'. Translation: Colgrave and Mynors, *BEH*, 3–5.

Saxons was sourced through the monastery at Lastingham;[30] the testimony of an otherwise unknown abbot named Esi and a selection of written sources and oral traditions covered the early history of East Anglia; material relating to the conversion of Lindsey came to Bede via a letter from Cyneberht (the contemporary bishop of that region at the time of writing) and oral accounts given by other unnamed informants.[31] For the history of his own kingdom, Bede drew upon his personal knowledge of Northumbrian affairs and the testimony of many individuals 'who either knew or remembered these things'.[32] Information about St Cuthbert (bishop of Hexham 684–685, and of Lindisfarne 685–687) was derived from a written account preserved at the monastery at Lindisfarne and the original research that Bede had undertaken in the course of preparing his own biography of that saint a few years previously.[33]

Bede took great care to establish the credibility of the individuals that are named in the preface to the *Historia ecclesiastica*: Daniel and Esi are 'esteemed' (*reuerentissimus*); Nothhelm is 'pious' (*religiosus*); and Albinus is 'a man most learned in all things' (*uir per omnia doctissimus*) who had searched through the Canterbury material 'carefully' (*diligenter*). The preface makes a number of positive value judgements about the quality of the information that Bede had access to: the unnamed men who informed Bede about the conversion of the kingdom of Lindsey are described as 'trustworthy' (*fidelium uirorum*); the accounts supplied by Northumbrian witnesses are said to be 'faithful' (*fideli*); and Bede obtained information about St Cuthbert from the 'trustworthy testimony of reliable witnesses' (*certissima fidelium uirorum adtestatione*). To bring order to this diverse array of material would have been a difficult task in

[30] Trumberht, a monk educated in the monastery of St Chad at Lastingham, was one of Bede's instructors in the study of the Scriptures: *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.3.

[31] See further: D.P. Kirby, 'Bede's native sources for the *Historia ecclesiastica*', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 48 (1966), 341–71. On Bede's use of oral testimony in the *Historia ecclesiastica* see: N.J. Higham, *Bede as an oral historian* (Jarrow Lecture, 2011).

[32] *Historia ecclesiastica*, preface: 'fideli innumerorum testium, qui haec scire uel meminisse poterant'. Bede was born in *c.* 673 and entered the monastic life in *c.* 680 aged seven; by the time he came to complete the *Historia ecclesiastica* in 731 he would have had several decades of personal experience to draw upon. However, as has often been noted (e.g. Markus, *Bede and ecclesiastical historiography*, 8–9), the *Historia ecclesiastica* says rather less about the eighth century than it does about the more distant events of the seventh.

[33] Bede's statement refers to the work done in preparation for his prose *Vita Cuthberti*. Bede also composed a *Life of Cuthbert* in hexameter verse, on which see: M. Lapidge, 'Bede's metrical *Vita S. Cuthberti*', in *St. Cuthbert, his cult and his community to AD 1200* eds G. Bonner, D.W. Rollason and C. Stancliffe (Woodbridge, 1989), 77–93, reprinted in M. Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin literature, 600–899* (London, 1996), 339–56, with updated additional notes at 509.

itself, but Bede fails to mention several further written sources that were used in the *Historia ecclesiastica*, such as *De excidio Britanniae* by Gildas and the collection of papal biographies known as the *Liber Pontificalis*.[34] Certain aspects of the *Historia ecclesiastica* were shaped by other texts silently passed over in the preface, for example: the autobiographical statement given in Book 5 Chapter 24, which may have been inspired by a similar passage in the *Historiarum libri X* of Gregory of Tours;[35] or the preface itself, which owes a debt to the proem of the genre-defining *Historia ecclesiastica* by Eusebius of Caesarea (*c.* 260–*c.* 340), which Bede accessed through the Latin translation and continuation by Rufinus of Aquileia (d. 410).[36] Standing behind all of this was Bede's comprehensive knowledge of the Latin Bible, which influenced the language, tone, structure and content of Bede's historical narrative in a profound and deliberate manner.[37]

Prophecy and the Past

The content of the Latin Bible served a different purpose in Bede's *Chronica maiora*, where it is used as a historical source and mined for chronological information. The chronicle divides the past into six world ages (*aetates saeculi*) which are defined by prominent points of division: the first age runs from Adam to Noah; the second from Noah to Abraham; the third from Abraham

[34] On the sources utilised in the *Historia ecclesiastica* see the introduction to Lapidge and Chiesa's new edition and Italian translation: *Storia degli inglesi* (2 vols, Rome; Milan, 2008–10), vol. I, xv–xli.

[35] The idea might also have been suggested to Bede by the autobiographical passages given at the end of Jerome's *De viris inlustribus* and a tract of the same name by Gennadius of Marseilles, both of which were known to Bede: Levison, 'Bede as historian', 132–3. As Levison points out, Bede refers directly to Gregory of Tours at *Retractatio in Actuum Apostolorum* (ed. M.L.W. Laistner, CCSL 121, 103–63), 28, lines 18–24: 'Georgius [*sic*] in libro historiarum suarum quinto ...'. *Cf.* Gregory of Tours, *Historiarum libri X* (eds B. Krusch and W. Levison, MGH SS rer. Merov. 1.1), 5.34.

[36] *Cf.* Eusebius of Caesarea (translation by Rufinus of Aquileia), *Historia ecclesiastica* (ed. T. Mommsen, *Eusebius Werke*, 2.1–2), 1.1. See: Levison, 'Bede as historian', 132 and the comments of J.M. Wallace-Hadrill, *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People. A historical commentary* (Oxford, 1988), 1–2. Eusebius's influence on Bede's historical writing is discussed by: L.W. Barnard, 'Bede and Eusebius as Church historians', in *Famulus Christi*, ed. G. Bonner (London, 1976), 106–24.

[37] The profound influence that the Latin Bible had upon the language and content of one of the episodes in the *Historia ecclesiastica* is demonstrated by: J.S. Barrow, 'How Coifi pierced Christ's side: a re-examination of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, II, Chapter 13', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 62 (2011), 693–706. See further Hilliard's essay in this volume, Chapter 8.

to David; the fourth from David to the Babylonian exile; the fifth from the exile to the birth of Christ; and the sixth age extends from Christ to the present day. The idea that past time could be divided into several distinct ages was a common patristic motif by the early eighth century.[38] Many different theories circulated around the early-medieval West, but Bede's six ages of history were inspired by the scheme popularised by St Augustine.[39] Bede used the figures given in the Vulgate Bible (a Latin translation largely undertaken by Jerome) to steer his chronicles, a decision which set him apart from his predecessor Isidore of Seville (*c.* 560–636), who had based his own world chronicles upon the chronological data of the Septuagint Bible (a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament produced in the second and third centuries BCE).[40] Bede's decision resulted in a much shorter approximation of the amount of time that had elapsed before the Incarnation of Christ: the traditional date for the Incarnation was *c.* 5199 *Annus Mundi* but Bede dated it to the year 3952.[41]

When he came to issue the *Chronica maiora* in 725, Bede would have been very aware that his calculations might attract criticism from others because their first outing in *De temporibus* (in 703) had inspired an accusation of heresy.[42] Some members of the retinue of Wilfrid, bishop of Hexham (d. 710) had (erroneously) alleged that Bede had denied that Christ was born in the sixth age of the world. Bede documented and contested this charge in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* of 708 and in doing so repudiated a series of misconceptions about the end of time, including the view that it could be calculated and expected in *Annus Mundi*

[38] For the patristic background see: H.L.C. Tristram, *Sex aetates mundi: die Weltzeitalter bei den Angelsachsen und den Iren: Untersuchungen und Texte* (Heidelberg, 1985), 21–30. Ages of historical time were often linked by analogy to the stages of the human life cycle: P. Archambault, 'The ages of man and the ages of the world: a study of two traditions', *Revue des Études Augustiniennes*, 12 (1966), 193–228; E. Sears, *The Ages of man: medieval interpretations of the life cycle* (Princeton, NJ, 1986); J.A. Burrow, *The Ages of man: a study in medieval writing and thought* (Oxford, 1986).

[39] Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 22.30; *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII* (ed. A. Mutzenbecher, CCSL 44A, 11–249), 58; *De Genesi contra Manichaeos* (ed. D. Weber, CSEL 91), 1.23–4; *De catechizandis rudibus* (ed. M.P.J. van den Hout, CCSL 46, 121–78), 22.39; *etc.* P. Siniscalco, 'Le età del mondo in Beda', *Romanobarbarica*, 3 (1978), 297–331, at 316–18; Darby, *Bede and the end of time*, 21–4.

[40] Isidore of Seville, *Chronica* (ed. J.C. Martin, CCSL 112). Also, a brief universal history is incorporated into the *Etymologiae* (ed. W.M. Lindsay, *Etymologiarum siue originum libri XX*), at 5.39. Bede drew upon these works extensively; see Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon library*, 212–14 for a list of citations.

[41] Bede's *Annus Mundi* chronology is discussed in Palmer's essay in Chapter 6 of this volume.

[42] *De temporibus*, 17–22.

6000 or 7000.[43] The choice to base the *Chronica maiora* upon the Vulgate data is justified at length in *De temporum ratione*, with explicit statements in defence of Bede's decision featuring in Chapter 67 and the volume's preface. The chronicle presented in Chapter 66 itself offers evidential proof for Bede's *Annus Mundi* framework by presenting a comprehensive history of the world which is ordered by that framework from start to finish, and by addressing the matter in some of its individual entries.[44] The *Chronica maiora* is a forceful demonstration of Bede's understanding of the structure of time which concedes no ground whatsoever from the position originally set out in 703.

The *Chronica maiora* is much longer than Bede's first world chronicle, which had offered only a very brief summary of the main events of universal history as Bede saw them.[45] The chronicle set out in *De temporibus* must have been underpinned by a great deal of careful research, but this is not immediately apparent from reading it. In contrast, the *Chronica maiora* transparently shows how Bede tackled a number of contentious matters, especially in its coverage of the Old Testament era (world ages 1–5). The chronological spine for the first two ages is largely taken over from the Book of Genesis, so that part of the chronicle was relatively straightforward to reconstruct. Things get a little more complicated in Age 3, where Genesis gives way to Exodus and Exodus to the Book of Judges; it is also at this point that Bede's dependence upon extra-biblical literature becomes more conspicuous. Some entries in the *Chronica maiora* show that Bede was very sensitive to issues relating to the veracity of his sources, such as the possible existence of faulty codices.[46] Bede's handling of the length of Joshua's rule over the people of Israel, a matter on which the Bible is silent, shows both the complexity of the task that Bede faced in putting the chronicle together and the careful way that he approached that task. In the entry under *Annus Mundi* 2519 Bede supplies the length of Joshua's rule (26 years) from the *Antiquitates*, a tract by the Jewish scholar Josephus, but in doing so makes it explicitly clear that he is privileging the account of Josephus over the

[43] The apocalyptic target years are mentioned in sections 14 and 15 of the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* (ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123C, 617–26). For the charge against Bede see section 1. The circumstances surrounding the composition of the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* are outlined in Darby, *Bede and the end of time*, 35–64. See also n. 54 below.

[44] For example, see the entry for *s.a.* 1656, where a citation from Augustine's *De civitate Dei* which supports Bede's choice of biblical source text is incorporated into the main body of the chronicle.

[45] The modern CCSL edition of the chronicle in *De temporibus* (Chapters 17–22) is 181 lines long. The edition of the *Chronica maiora* of *De temporum ratione* 66 extends over 2,066 lines, making it more than 11 times the length of the earlier attempt.

[46] *De temporum ratione*, 66, *s.a.* 3389.

calculation preferred by Eusebius (27 years).[47] Bede was careful to explain the reason for his choice: Eusebius, Bede says, passed over the decade allocated to Elon the Zebulunite's leadership of Israel because he did not come across it in the Septuagint; Bede surmised that Eusebius must have assigned an extra year to the reign of Joshua to help balance his own calculations and cover the ten-year gap.[48] In order to work out how many years he should allocate to Joshua's rule, Bede consulted two extra-biblical sources and, rather than automatically privilege the Christian text over an account written by a Jewish author, Bede followed the reckoning of Josephus because his research led him to believe that Josephus provided the more accurate historical record in that instance.

The chronology of the fifth world age presented Bede with some especially tricky issues to navigate. In his entry for the death of King Artaxerxes I of Persia at *Annus Mundi* 3529, drawing directly upon Jerome's Latin translation of the chronicle of Eusebius, Bede explains that: 'Up to this point Holy Scripture follows a chronological sequence. The deeds of the Jews which follow hereafter are recorded in the Books of the Maccabees, and in the writings of Josephus and [Julius] Africanus'.[49] Chapter 9 of *De temporum ratione* reveals that Bede drew upon an ancient Old Testament prophecy to inform his understanding of the remainder of the 5th world age. In Daniel 9.24–7 the Angel Gabriel appears to Daniel in a vision and speaks the following words to him:

> Seventy weeks are diminished upon your people and upon your holy city that transgression may be finished; and sin may have an end; and iniquity may be abolished; and everlasting justice may be brought; and vision and prophecy may be fulfilled; and the Saint of saints may be anointed. Know, therefore, and take notice: that from the going forth of the word to build up Jerusalem again unto

---

[47] Jerome (translating Eusebius of Caesarea), *Chronicon* (ed. R. Helm, *Eusebius Werke* 7.1), 46a.1–3; Josephus, *Antiquitates* (ed. F. Blatt, *The Latin Josephus*), 5.1.29. Both of these works were originally written in Greek and then translated into Latin in Late Antiquity: St Jerome's translation and continuation of the chronicle of Eusebius was undertaken in the late fourth century; the Latin edition of the *Antiquitates* was commissioned by Cassiodorus (d. *c.* 580).

[48] *De temporum ratione*, 66, *s.a.* 2790 (*cf. s.a.* 2519).

[49] *De temporum ratione*, 66, *s.a.* 3529 (drawing upon Jerome, *Chronicon*, 113.7–13): 'Huc usque diuina scriptura temporum seriem continet: quae uero post haec apud iudaeos sunt gesta, de libro machabeorum et iosephi atque africani scriptis exhibentur, qui deinceps uniuersam historiam usque ad romana tempora persecuti sunt'. The Books of the Maccabees were usually regarded as deuterocanonical throughout the patristic and early medieval period (see for example Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 18.36). 1 and 2 Maccabees are included at the end of the Old Testament in the *Codex Amiatinus* a Wearmouth-Jarrow Bible finished before 716. See further: R. Marsden, *The text of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge, 1995), 83–5, 107–201.

> Christ, the prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. In a brief space of time the street and the wall shall be built again. And after sixty-two weeks Christ shall be slain and the people that deny him shall not be his. And a people, with their leader that shall come, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be waste; and after the end of the war a devastation shall be determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many, for one week, and in the midst of the week the victim and the sacrifice will cease.[50]

Most patristic interpretations of the seventy prophetic weeks regarded them as weeks made up of years, not days. Bede would have been well aware that the 490-year period suggested by the 70 weeks of Daniel 9.24 had fuelled apocalyptic expectations in the past. In Book 9 of his *In Danielem*, Jerome states that while many others have attempted to explain the 70 prophetic weeks, he is reluctant to pass judgement upon their views himself; instead Jerome recites interpretations by several other writers, one of which is credited to Apollinarius of Laodicea (d. *c.* 390).[51] According to Jerome, Apollinarius had asserted that counting forwards from the birth of Christ, Elijah would return after 69 weeks of years had passed (*c.* 482 AD), and that the persecution and defeat of Antichrist would follow in the final 'week' of the 70.[52] At the time when it was included in Jerome's tract on Daniel (*c.* 407), the eschatological framework attributed to Apollinarius placed the drama of the last days less than a hundred years into the future and Jerome advised his readership to treat it with extreme caution.[53] Although the predictions of Apollinarius had long since come to nothing by the time that Bede was working on *De temporum ratione*, it is interesting that Bede's own attempt to rationalise the 70 prophetic weeks in that text is immediately followed by a chapter on the week of the world ages (*De hebdomada aetatum saeculi*), another

[50] Daniel 9.24–7: 'Septuaginta ebdomades adbreviatae sunt super populum tuum et super urbem sanctam tuam ut consummetur praevaricatio et finem accipiat peccatum et deleatur iniquitas et adducatur iustitia sempiterna et impleatur visio et prophetia et unguatur sanctus sanctorum. Scito ergo et animadverte ab exitu sermonis ut iterum aedificetur Hierusalem usque ad christum ducem hebdomades septem et ebdomades sexaginta duae erunt et rursum aedificabitur platea et muri in angustia temporum. Eet post ebdomades sexaginta duas occidetur christus et non erit eius et civitatem et sanctuarium dissipabit populus cum duce venturo et finis eius vastitas et post finem belli statuta desolation. Confirmavit autem pactum multis ebdomas una et in dimidio ebdomadis deficiet hostia et sacrificium'. Translation: Douay-Rheims (modified).

[51] Jerome, *In Danielem*, 3, lines 126–617. In addition to Apollinarius, Jerome credits interpretations to: Julius Africanus; Eusebius of Caesarea; Hippolytus; Clement; Origen; Tertullian; and a group of Hebraic scholars (*Hebraei*).

[52] Jerome, *In Danielem*, 3, lines 422–63.

[53] Jerome, *In Danielem*, 3, lines 422–8.

unusual week which was also liable to be used as the basis of speculative theories about the timing of the apocalypse.[54]

In *De temporum ratione* Bede mentions that the 70 prophetic weeks were widely misunderstood by his own readers (*lectores*), who were 'much exercised by this special type of week'.[55] Jerome had given multiple explanations but Bede settled upon one: the seventy weeks of years relate not to the future and the end of time but to Christ's first coming in the past. The prophecy, it is argued, correctly foretold the amount of time which elapsed between the point at which a decision was made to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem in the 20th year of King Artaxerxes (the 'going forth of the word to build up Jerusalem again' of Daniel 9.25) and the Passion of Christ. The 70 weeks of years therefore had implications for Bede's attempt to establish the chronology of the latter part of the fifth world age, that is: precisely the part of history for which a chronicler must rely upon Julius Africanus, Josephus and the Books of the Maccabees because there is no overarching steering narrative provided in the Holy Scriptures. Bede explains that the key to understanding the seventy weeks of years is to regard them as referring to an unusual type of shortened year made up of 12 ordinary lunar months. He calculates that 490 years of this type are equivalent to 475 standard solar years and shows that the prophecy accurately predicted that Christ's Passion would take place 475 years after the time at which Artaxerxes gave permission for the walls of Jerusalem to be rebuilt.[56] The view that the prophecy referred to weeks of years made up of lunar months had been put forward in the third century by Julius Africanus, whose own interpretation Bede encountered as one of the many cited by Jerome in his commentary on Daniel.[57] Bede acknowledged

[54] *De temporum ratione*, 10. Some of Bede's contemporaries believed that the end of time would come 7,000 years after Creation because the world was made in seven days: *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 15, lines 268–73. The chronological framework set forth in the near-contemporary Apocalypse of Pseudo Methodius is a made up of seven thousand-year periods. The *Laterculus Malalianus*, a text associated with the intellectual milieu of Canterbury in the time of Archbishop Theodore (d. 690) and Abbot Hadrian (d. 710), advances a chronology based upon thousand-year days of a world week, the present day falling within a seventh and final 'sabbath' era: *Laterculus Malalianus* (ed. J. Stevenson, *The 'Laterculus Malalianus' and the school of Archbishop Theodore*), 3–4, 23–4.

[55] *De temporum ratione*, 9, lines 91–4: 'Totum ideo prophetae testimonium ponentes, quantum facultas suppetebat, exposuimus quia hoc et a plerisque lectoribus ignorari et speciale genus hebdomadae flagitare cognouimus'.

[56] *De temporum ratione*, 9, lines 1–57. This explanation is also set out at *In Ezram et Neemiam* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A, 237–392), 3, lines 132–57; there, Bede directs the reader to the longer passage in *De temporum ratione*, which he refers to as his 'book on time' (*liber temporum*).

[57] Jerome, *In Danielem*, 3, lines 144–223.

his methodological debt to Africanus in the closing lines of *De temporum ratione* 9, but in doing so he makes it clear that he had done his own set of calculations and disagreed with Africanus's results.[58] The conclusions advanced in Chapter 9 carry through to the *Chronica maiora*: the death of Artaxerxes is placed at *Annus Mundi* 3529 in the chronicle; his reign lasted for 40 years, and so by implication the decision to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem in the twentieth year of that reign took place in AM 3509 (Bede knew from Nehemiah 2.1–9 that this had occurred in the month of Nisan).[59] The date of the Passion (the drama of which also unfolded during Nisan) follows exactly 475 years later at *Annus Mundi* 3984, just as the prophecy of the seventy weeks had predicted.

Prophecy and the Future

Bede's willingness to synchronise the temporal framework suggested to him by the seventy prophetic weeks with the calculations of his world chronicle leads us to another way in which his ideas about the past and the future were similarly conceived: his conceptions of both aspects were fundamentally shaped by biblical prophecies. Bede had a very clear view of how he expected the future to unfold which was governed by a keen sense of temporal precision. *De temporum ratione* 69 outlines an eschatological programme that is expected to take place over a period of time slightly longer than seven years (although it should be recognised that Bede built an important caveat into that programme which will be discussed in due course below). Just as he did in the *Chronica maiora*, Bede interpreted the relevant biblical numbers with a critical eye and with the writings of others set out before him.

Bede's end-time sequence begins with the return of Enoch and Elijah to convert the Jews to the Christian Faith in a ministry which will last for three and a half years.[60] The Jews perform a variety of functions in different medieval apocalyptic scenarios, and two things are worth highlighting about Bede's own understanding of their role in the drama of the last days: first, Bede expected the large-scale conversion of Jews to be achieved peacefully through the preaching of Enoch and Elijah, and not through coercion or force;[61] second, Bede

[58] *De temporum ratione*, 9, lines 105–13.

[59] *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 3, lines 97–112.

[60] *De temporum ratione*, 69, lines 1–17.

[61] A forced conversion was attempted in Visigothic Spain by King Sisebut (d. 620/1) in the early seventh century, a measure which drew criticism from Isidore of Seville: *Historia Gothorum* (ed. C. Rodríguez Alonso, *Las Historias de los Godos, Vándalos y Suevos*), 60. See further: Y.

expected the Jews to perform a positive function, their conversion making the Church complete and ready to face the ensuing Day of Judgement as one with the Gentiles.[62] This second point, in particular, distinguishes Bede from some of his eastern and continental counterparts whose writings display a more hostile attitude towards the Jews and, as a consequence, expect them to act in fierce opposition to the Church at the end of time.[63]

The returning prophets motif ultimately derives from Revelation 11.3, where it is said that power will be granted to 'two witnesses' (*duobus testibus*) to prophesy for 1,260 days clothed in sackcloth (this number of days broadly equates to three and a half years). The identity of the two witnesses was the subject of a great deal of speculation in patristic exegesis, and Bede settled upon Elijah and Enoch after showing some uncertainty regarding the matter in his earlier writings.[64] His identification of Enoch as the second witness owes a debt to the thought of Gregory the Great, as has already been mentioned above. Elijah's return before the 'day of the Lord' is marked out very clearly in Malachi 4.5–6, where it is said that he will 'turn the hearts of the fathers to their children' (*convertet cor patrum ad filios*). This statement from the prophecy of Malachi, which Bede took as an allusion to the future reconciliation of the Jews and Gentiles, is woven into the account of the activities of Enoch and Elijah in *De temporum ratione* 69 along with the statement from Revelation 11.3 that

Hen, 'A Visigothic king in search of an identity – *Sisebutus Gothorum gloriosissimus princeps*', in *Ego trouble: authors and their identities in the early Middle Ages*, eds R. Corradini, M. Gillis, R. McKitterick and I. van Renswoude (Vienna, 2010), 89–99, at 95–8. An attempt to convert the Jews was made in Bede's lifetime by the Byzantine Emperor Leo III (r. 717–741): Theophanes the Confessor, *Chronographia* (ed. C. De Boor, *Theophanis Chronographia*), *s.a.* 6213 (AD 720/1); A. Sharf, *Byzantine Jewry: from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade* (London, 1971), 61–81.

[62] Bede usually emphasises the themes of reconciliation and salvation when discussing the eschatological conversion of the Jews, although his early commentary on Revelation anticipates their humiliation (*humiliatio*) in the time of Antichrist: *Expositio Apocalypseos* (ed. R. Gryson, CCSL 121A), 4, lines 208–12 (drawing upon the *Commentarius in Apocalypsin* of Primasius). A more representative passage is found in Bede's first commentary on Acts, where the future conversion of the Jews is expected to bring the Church to a state of perfect completion: *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, 1, lines 171–88. See further: A.P. Scheil, *The footsteps of Israel: understanding Jews in Anglo-Saxon England* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2004), 23–194.

[63] The hostility to the Jews expressed by continental writers, such as the ninth-century exegetes Haimo of Auxerre and Florus of Lyons, and in eastern texts such as the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, is discussed by J. Heil, '"Nos nescientes de hoc velle manere – "We wish to remain ignorant about this": timeless end, or: approaches to reconceptualizing eschatology after A.D. 800 (AM 6000)', *Traditio*, 55 (2000), 73–103.

[64] Darby, *Bede and the end of time*, 109–16.

the witnesses will prophesy for 1,260 days clothed in sackcloth.[65] A subsequent verse from Revelation 11 is cited as evidence that Enoch and Elijah will be killed by Antichrist (the 'beast that ascends from the bottomless pit' of Revelation 11.7) and be mocked by his aides after their deaths.[66] Bede's vision for the first stage of the end-time sequence was therefore indebted to two different biblical prophecies – Malachi 4 and Revelation 11 – and he was evidently prepared to accept that the length of this stage of the sequence had been predetermined by God and revealed unambiguously in the Holy Scriptures.

This is also true of the sequence's second stage: the time of Antichrist's persecution. That too was expected to last for three and a half years. Again, Bede's expectations are steered by the Book of Revelation; he cites the following verse in *De temporum ratione* 69: 'And it [the beast] was given a mouth to speak great things and blasphemies and it was given power to operate for forty-two months' (Revelation 13.5).[67] The beast is understood to refer to Antichrist, who will channel all of the authority of the Devil to execute the most horrendous persecution of all time.[68] A period of three and a half years of persecution is also suggested by Chapter 12 of the Book of Daniel which predicts that the 'abomination of desolation' will be set up at the end of time for 1,290 days, a passage which Bede connected with the time of Antichrist and alluded to in *De temporum ratione* 69.[69] Some aspects of Antichrist's career remained obscure to Bede, such as the identity of who would kill him,[70] but Bede was very clear that the reign of terror would last for three and a half years. The method employed to reconstruct the time of Antichrist in *De temporum ratione* 69 is similar to the way that Bede explained the period of Enoch and Elijah's preaching earlier in

---

[65] *De temporum ratione*, 69, lines 5–27.

[66] *De temporum ratione*, 69, lines 27–32.

[67] Revelation 13.5: 'et datum est ei os loquens magna et blasphemiae et data est illi potestas facere menses quadraginta duo'.

[68] *De temporum ratione*, 69, lines 33–40. *Cf. In Marci evangelium expositio* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 120, 431–648), 4, lines 171–95; *De eo quod ait Isaias* (ed. J.P. Migne, PL 94, cols 702–10), col. 706.

[69] Daniel 12.11; *De temporum ratione*, 69, lines 51–3.

[70] Antichrist will be killed by either the Archangel Michael or the Lord Himself according to *De temporum ratione*, 69, 40–43. Michael is unambiguously identified as Antichrist's killer in *De eo quod ait Isaias*, col. 707, where the idea is credited to Gregory the Great (*cf.* Bede, *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 20, lines 2–8). Elsewhere, Bede expresses the view that Antichrist will be killed by 'the Lord Jesus' (*Dominum Iesum*): *Libri quattuor in principium Genesis* (ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 118A), 1, lines 1212–17. A statement at *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 35, lines 122–5 echoes 2 Thessalonians 2.8 to predict that the devil will be destroyed by the breath of the Lord's mouth at the end of the age.

the same chapter. In both cases Bede drew information about the length of each part of the sequence from the Book of Revelation. Supplementary information about each stage was then supplied from an Old Testament prophecy: the Book of Daniel in the case of the time of Antichrist; the Book of Malachi in the case of the two witnesses.

Bede's understanding of the biblical prophecies in question was influenced by the writings of the Church Fathers, which were silently used as interpretative filters. Their influence is made conspicuously clear in the final pre-Judgement phase of Bede's end-time sequence, the test of patience for the saints. After reminding the reader that the time of Antichrist will last for 1,290 days, Bede cites Daniel 12.12, which states: 'blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days'.[71] In the final lines of *De temporum ratione* 69, the 45-day period of delay implied by this prophetic statement is explained by a citation from Jerome's *In Danielem* (the text given in italics below is that taken verbatim from Jerome):

> Jerome explains it in this way: *He [Daniel] says blessed is he who, after Antichrist is slain, waits until the forty-fifth* day after the 1,290 days, that is three and a half years*, when the Lord and Saviour shall return in his majesty. But why there should be 45 days of silence after the slaying of Antichrist is known to God alone, unless perhaps we might say that the postponing of the Kingdom is* a test *of the patience of the saints.*[72]

The only slight changes that Bede makes to Jerome's original statement are a brief interjection to clarify the length of time for which the persecution will endure, and what appears to be a subtle change of wording in the final line of text: Bede uses *probatio* for 'test', which replaces *comprobatio* in the Hieronyman original, a choice which directly connects Bede's passage to the language of some of the New Testament epistles of the Vulgate (which use the term *probatio* to

---

[71] *De temporum ratione*, 69, lines 50–52: 'Denique propheta danihel, qui regnum antichristi mille ducentis nonaginta diebus futurum describit, ita concludit: beatus qui exspectat et peruenit ad dies mille cccxxxv'.

[72] *De temporum ratione*, 69, lines 53–8 (citing Jerome, *In Danielem*, 4, lines 671–7): '*Quod hieronimus ita exponit: beatus, inquit, qui interfecto antichristo* supra mille ccxc dies, id est, tres semis annos, dies *xlv prestulatur, quibus est dominus atque saluator in sua maiestate uenturus. Quare autem post interfectionem antichristi xl et v dierum silentium sit, diuinae scientiae est, nisi forte dicamus*: *dilatio regni sanctorum patientiae probatio est*'. Translation: Wallis, *Reckoning of Time*, 243. Two of Bede's other major eschatological works describe a test of patience for the saints in near identical terms: *Expositio Apocalypseos*, 10, lines 81–8; *De eo quod ait Isaias*, col. 708.

describe various tests of faith).[73] Bede introduces Jerome's statement about the test of patience with the important caveat that the Day of Judgement will not follow immediately on from the death of Antichrist, otherwise 'the men of that age would be able to know the time of the judgement' (*scire possent homines illius [a]eui tempus iudicii*) by counting forward three and a half years from the start of the final persecution.[74] It is therefore implied that the 45-day period somehow symbolically represents an open ended amount of time, although Bede does not explain exactly how he understood that relationship to work. He makes it explicitly clear though, in a way that Jerome does not, that even the cessation of Antichrist's persecution will not signal the immediate arrival of the Last Judgement because 'it is granted to no one to know how long after the end of that persecution it will come'.[75]

The careful presentation of the test of patience in *De temporum ratione* offers an important insight into the way that Bede used the ideas of others in forming his timeline for the last days. Even when drawing upon a credited citation from Jerome, one of the most revered Latin Church Fathers of all, Bede qualified that citation by prefixing it with a statement of his own which repositioned the borrowed passage to make it serve Bede's own particular concerns. Bede seems to have had access to a more or less complete edition of *In Danielem* but he used Jerome's eschatological ideas in a very selective manner.[76] Bede passed over a great many of the interpretations that he encountered in the commentary on Daniel in silence and his own relatively brief discussion of the end-time sequence in *De temporum ratione* 69 has a very different feel to Jerome's extensive ruminations on the last days. Jerome identified the fourth of the four beasts mentioned in Daniel 7 as the present-day empire of the Romans (the other three were thought to represent the fallen Babylonian, Persian and Macedonian empires).[77] The drama

---

[73] E.g. James 1.3; Romans 5.3–4.

[74] *De temporum ratione*, 69, lines 40–50.

[75] *De temporum ratione*, 69, lines 48–50: 'post quantum uero tempus consummatae eiusdem persecutionis uenturus sit, nemini prorsus scire conceditur'. Translation: Wallis, *Reckoning of Time*, 243. See further: R.E. Lerner, 'Refreshment of the saints: the time after Antichrist as a station for early progress in medieval thought', *Traditio*, 32 (1976), 97–144, at 101–5; R.E. Lerner, 'The medieval return to the thousand-year sabbath', in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, eds R.K. Emmerson and B. McGinn (Ithaca, 1992), 51–71, at 53–5; Wallis, *Commentary on Revelation*, 159, n. 347.

[76] Bede cites *In Danielem* by name twice in the *Chronica maiora*: *De temporum ratione*, 66, *s.a*. 3389 and *s.a*. 3468. For a list of borrowings see: Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon library*, 215.

[77] Jerome, *In Danielem*, 2, lines 546–66; *cf.* Jerome's interpretation of the four kingdoms mentioned in Daniel 2.31–40, which are also related to the Babylonian, Persian, Macedonian and Roman empires: 1, lines 389–406.

of the last days will unfold when the Roman Empire disintegrates and the world is partitioned into ten kingdoms which will then be made subject to Antichrist in quick succession.[78] Bede, writing in an entirely different geopolitical landscape, overlooked this idea entirely and chose not to tie his vision for the end of time to the fortunes of any political entity (indeed, the end of the Roman Empire in the West is marked out in both the *Chronica maiora* and *Historia ecclesiastica* and placed in the middle of the fifth century, in the time of Emperor Valentinian III and the patrician Aetius; Bede gave no indication that he expected it to be revived in the near or distant future).[79]

Conclusions

The temporal precision and determinative nature of Bede's eschatological vision distinguish it from two of its major influences, Augustine and Jerome. Jerome offered copious amounts of eschatological detail but Bede stripped back what he found in Jerome's exegesis of the Book of Daniel and took from it one essential idea which relates to time: the test of patience for the saints. Augustine declared that he was uncertain about how the pre-Judgement future would unfold but Bede produced a definitive programme for the last days made up of three distinct sequential stages. Of all of the information that Bede encountered about the end of the world in the prophetic parts of the Holy Scriptures, he was especially drawn towards the numbers relating to time: the 1,260 days of Revelation 11.3 for which the two witnesses will preach; the 1,290 days of Daniel 12.11 and the 42 months of Revelation 13.5, which together suggest that the time of Antichrist's persecution will last for three and a half years; the additional 45 days of Daniel 12.12, which signal the beginning of a test of patience for the saints. The set of expectations for the end of time presented in the final chapters of *De temporum ratione* stands apart from the scenarios that Bede encountered in the writings of his patristic predecessors, and it is also distinctive by the standards of its own time because of its comparatively short, yet very precise preconditions narrative and the sympathetic attitude towards the Jews and their eschatological role that it advocates.

Bede never wavered from the position that the timing of the end of the world was unknowable, but the sequence through which the drama of the last

[78] Jerome, *In Danielem*, 2, lines 592–606 (commenting on the ten horns of the fourth beast, Daniel 7.7–8).

[79] Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 1.21; *De temporum ratione*, 66, *s.a.* 4410 (drawing upon the *Chronicon* of Marcellinus Comes).

days would unfold came to be very clear in his mind. This tension lies at the heart of Bede's eschatological thought: the initiation of the end-time sequence is indeterminable, yet its key stages will proceed in a predictable manner once it actually starts. The chronological precision of Bede's framework for the last days, which extends from his willingness to take the Biblical numbers relating to the two witnesses and the time of Antichrist at face value, could be seen to compromise the idea that the end of time is known only to God (because once Enoch and Elijah have returned and the eschatological drama is set in motion, it would be possible to speculate about the timing of the Last Judgement by counting forward seven years). Bede recognised this issue and addressed it in *De temporum ratione* 69, presenting the test of patience of the saints as a solution, but one is left with the feeling that the matter is not entirely resolved. The interesting thing, so far as this essay is concerned, is that Bede did not attempt to solve the problem by allegorising the numbers away: he was committed to the idea of the eschatological future as history, and so Bede gave that future a structured chronology which, just like the past, was governed by the numbers relating to time set out in the Holy Scriptures.

Bede thought of the collective experiences of the Christian Church in the past, present and future as being part of a single continuous spectrum, with the events of the pre-Judgement end-time sequence not divorced from historical time in any way. The ordered timeline set out in *De temporum ratione* 69 is governed by the same sense of historicity that shaped Bede's understanding of the past: the last days will unfold in a linear manner, stage by stage, just as the world ages had followed each other sequentially in the time that had elapsed from Creation to the present day. The conversion of the Jews, the persecution of Antichrist and the test of patience were regarded as tangible 'historical' events of the time to come, to be experienced physically by those who live at the end of the age. The methodology which lies behind Bede's description of the end times in *De temporum ratione* overlaps with the working practices which shaped the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* and the *Chronica maiora*. Those two histories were underpinned by a great deal of critical engagement with many different types of source materials, and although a comparatively smaller body of literature lies behind the eschatological chronology mapped out in *De temporum ratione* 69, that chronology was put together with the same concern for temporal accuracy which defined Bede's major historical outputs. Accordingly, it is appropriate to refer to the consolidated eschatological sequence set out in Chapter 69 of *De temporum ratione* as Bede's 'history of the future'.

Chapter 6

The Ends and Futures of Bede's *De temporum ratione*

James T. Palmer

The imminence of history's end weighed heavily on Bede's mind.[1] He did not doubt, following the teachings of St Augustine of Hippo, that God alone knew the exact time of the End. But his hero Pope Gregory the Great had taught the English that there was little time left, and speculation was rife that chronological traditions might reveal something about the timing of the Last Judgement.[2] Bede's eschatological thought, alongside hints about some of the arguments he had with contemporaries, is revealed in many of his writings, including his commentary on Revelation, the 'Letter to Plegwine' and his wide-ranging computistical handbook, *De temporum ratione*.[3] At the very end of this last work (Chapters 66–71) Bede set out one of the clearest articulations of Augustinian apocalyptic thought, and in doing so gave the Carolingian world one of its most popular resources on apocalyptic time. Yet, despite the *prima facie* situation implied by one intellectual 'authority' approving the thought of another 'authority', this was a notably controversial thing for Bede to have done and it led to argument both at home and in continental Europe. It is the purpose

[1] My thanks to the AHRC, whose award of a Fellowship for 2011/12 made this essay and other things possible. A significant portion of this essay was written in Paris in the Salle de manuscrits occidentaux in the Bibliothèque nationale, whose staff were always helpful. I also thank the staff in the Handschriftenlesesaal in Berlin's Staatsbibliothek and at the Manuscript Reading Room in the British Library. I am eternally grateful to Faith Wallis for asking me difficult questions about *De temporum ratione* and helping me to answer them; and to Peter Darby, Jo Story and Immo Warntjes for their comments and advice.

[2] Gregory the Great, *Registrum epistularum* (ed. D.L. Norberg, CCSL 140, 140A), 11.37; Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica* (eds B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors, *BEH*), 1.32. On Gregory's eschatology see C. Dagens, 'La fin des temps et l'Église selon Saint Grégoire le Grand', *Recherches de science religieuse*, 58 (1970), 273–88 and R.A. Markus, *Gregory the Great and his world* (Cambridge, 1997), 51–67.

[3] See now P.N. Darby, *Bede and the end of time* (Farnham, 2012).

of this essay to ask what Bede's vision of the future in *De temporum ratione* really was and why it produced the reactions it did.

The background was complicated. Two related early Christian traditions asserted that the world would endure for only 6,000 years in imitation of the Creation Week, ending either with Judgement Day (the apocalyptic view) or the inauguration of a thousand-year-long earthly reign of Christ and his saints (the millenarian or millennialist view). The first argument many condemned, including Augustine, for denying divine mystery, while the second was widely dismissed for relying on an all-too-literal reading of Revelation 20.4–7 which prophesied a thousand-year-long reign of Christ and his saints. A pressing difficulty in the early Middle Ages was the proximity of Y6K, particularly in the case of Bede because the dominant reckoning, established by Eusebius and Jerome, would have seen it fall in or around 800 (AMII). Richard Landes, in an essay published in 1988, amassed considerable evidence to prove that interest in the apocalyptic tradition was widespread at the time (a view I support) and that chronographical traditions were changed in order to sidestep the issue (changes I argue were driven by other concerns).[4] The impression of sidestepping stems from Bede's work on two scores: first, because when he compared the Hebrew and Greek versions of the Old Testament he discovered that the Greek added 1,257 years, and so he proposed a new, lower world age (AMIII); and second, he started to popularise for the first time dating events relative to the Incarnation (AD-dating) rather than to the age of the world, most notably in the *Historia ecclesiastica*. Bede never stated that these were deliberately anti-apocalyptic moves on his part, and indeed in the first case his main concern seems to have been for scholarly accuracy. We must be careful not to subordinate all relevant debates to apocalyptic/anti-apocalyptic discourses, when some such as those in chronology and computus were important in and of themselves. *De temporum ratione*, as we shall see, can be a useful case study for helping to disambiguate some of the issues involved here.

From the standpoint outlined above, of course, it will be as important to understand the reception of Bede's work as much as what he set out to do. Bede often wrote argumentatively, in order to persuade audiences negotiating a

[4] R. Landes, 'Lest the Millennium be fulfilled: apocalyptic expectations and the pattern of western chronography, 100–800 CE', in *The use and abuse of eschatology in the Middle Ages*, eds W. Verbeke, D. Verhelst and A. Welkenhuysen (Leuven, 1988), 137–211; J.T. Palmer, 'Calculating time and the end of time in the Carolingian World, c. 740–820', *English Historical Review*, 126, 523 (2011), 1307–31; J.T. Palmer, 'The ordering of time', in *Abendländische Apokalyptik. Kompendium zur Genealogie der Endzeit*, eds L. Schlöndorff, C. Zolles, C. Feik, M. Zolles and V. Wieser (Berlin, 2013), 605–18.

heterogeneous intellectual landscape, and not everyone agreed with him or used his work uncritically. The standard modern editions are useful for grounding a study of the reception of *De temporum ratione* but only up to a point. When Charles Jones compiled his edition for Corpus Christianorum in 1980, he reprinted his own incomplete 1943 text (Chapters 1–65) with Theodor Mommsen's 1898 edition of the chronicle and end chapters (Chapters 66–71), adding also a transcription of the Laon-Metz glosses of 873/4.[5] Mommsen had used significantly fewer manuscripts than Jones had, which makes the text's critical apparatus problematic, even if it was supplemented by the descriptions of some manuscripts and their variations.[6] In 1999 Faith Wallis drew renewed attention to the variation in the way even just the chronicle was treated by medieval authors and copyists, who often edited, updated, replaced or omitted it.[7] Jones and Mommsen knew and discussed some of these issues, of course, but their work was to establish the text, not to work through the wider implications for early medieval communities. In this essay, therefore, after analysing Bede's work itself, I will turn to a sketch of the different ways in which *De temporum ratione* was treated in the century or so after his death. In doing so, we will gain a better insight into the contribution of *De temporum ratione* to eschatological thought in the eighth and ninth centuries.

The End of Time and *De temporum ratione*

It is often underappreciated how much of a battle for the future Bede faced when it came to computus.[8] The Synod of Whitby in 664, at which the 'Roman reckoning' for calculating future Easters was proclaimed king, was less of an absolute victory than some have assumed on the basis of the later accounts.[9] On

[5] Bede, *De temporum ratione*, ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123B, from C.W. Jones, *Bedae opera de temporibus* (Cambridge, MA, 1943) and Bede, *Chronica maiora*, ed. T. Mommsen, MGH Auct. ant. 13 (Berlin, 1888), 247–327.

[6] Mommsen, MGH Auct. ant. 13, 231–40.

[7] F. Wallis, *Bede: The reckoning of time*, revised 2nd edition (Liverpool, 2004), 363–4.

[8] On Bede's (limited) place in the computistical debates of the seventh and eighth centuries see I. Warntjes, *The Munich computus: text and translation. Irish computistics between Isidore of Seville and the Venerable Bede and its reception in Carolingian times* (Stuttgart, 2010), xlvii–li.

[9] Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 3.25; Stephen of Ripon, *Vita Wilfridi* (ed. B. Colgrave, *Life of Bishop Wilfrid*), 10. A good critical summary, with rich footnotes, is in Warntjes, *The Munich computus*, xxxviii–xli. More old-fashioned recent accounts include D.A.E. Pelteret, 'The issue of apostolic authority at the Synod of Whitby', in *The Easter controversy of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages*, eds D. Ó Cróinín and I. Warntjes (Turnhout, 2011), 150–72; C. Corning, *The*

the one hand, of course, Bede was open about how the opponents of the Roman reckoning persisted in their 'heresy', as he told the story of how the Picts and the community in Iona persisted in their attachment to the 84-year Easter table with *saltus lunae* every fourteen years (lunar limits *xiv* to *xx*, calendar limits 26 March to 23 April), at least until Ecgberht converted them to the Roman reckoning in 716 and Bede's own narrative runs out of steam.[10] This was, however, only half the story. Bede and Stephen of Ripon, with half a century's hindsight, proclaimed a clear and unambiguous victory for the 'Roman' Easter propounded by Dionysius Exiguus (lunar limits *xv* to *xxi*, calendar limits 22 March to 25 April) and this is the version of events which has naturally formed the basis of the standard narrative of events. Nevertheless, there was another 'Roman' reckoning in place, based on the tables of Victorius of Aquitaine (lunar limits *xvi* to *xxii*, calendar limits 22 March to 21 April). Its fate in this story is less clear but its adherents remained active: new Victorian computi were composed in Irish circles in 689 and 699, and as late as 764 in the Rhineland, so Bede's complaint about *amatores Victorii* ('lovers of Victorius') in 725 is not surprising.[11] Despite the 'resolution' at Whitby, the international networks in which computus flourished meant that Bede never operated in a world where the pattern of future Easters was entirely set by a Dionysiac framework.

The significance of computistical debates to Bede's apocalyptic thought are well known. The first round was conducted in and around AD 703, when Bede composed *De natura rerum*, *De temporibus* and *Expositio Apocalypseos* as a trilogy outlining the nature of past, present and future time.[12] The timing may not be incidental or determined entirely by the 'approach' of the year 6000,

Celtic and Roman traditions: conflict and consensus in the Early Medieval Church (New York, NY; Basingstoke, 2006); and G. Declercq, *Anno Domini: the origins of the Christian era* (Turnhout, 2000), 155–6.

[10] Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.22.

[11] Bede, *De temporum ratione*, 51; *Quaestiones de computo Austrasiae* (ed. A. Borst, MGH QQ zur Geistesgesch 21.1, 466–508). See also the evidence discussed by I. Warntjes, 'A newly discovered prologue of AD 699 to the Easter table of Victorius of Aquitaine in an unknown Sirmond manuscript', *Peritia*, 21 (2010), 255–84 at 267 and in his *The Munich computus*, lviii; M. Ohashi, 'The Easter Table of Victorius of Aquitaine in Early Medieval England', in *The Easter controversy*, eds Warntjes and Ó Cróinín, 137–49 and her 'Theory and history: an interpretation of the Paschal Controversy in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*', in *Bède le Vénérable entre tradition et postérité*, eds S. Lebecq, M. Perrin and O. Szerwiniack (Lille, 2005), 177–85. It should be borne in mind that Victorius's work was not technically confused or deficient, as it is often portrayed, but perhaps more theologically controversial because of its lunar limits.

[12] Darby, *Bede and the end of time*, esp. 32–3; P.N. Darby, 'Bede's time shift of 703 in context', in *Abendländische Apokalyptik*, eds Wieser, Zolles, Feik, Zolles and Schlöndorff, 619–40 – my thanks to Dr Darby for making his work accessible to me in advance of publication.

because there was much computistical work to be done at precisely that time. Dionysius's original table had run for 95 years (or five 19-year lunar cycles) up to 626, leading Felix of Squillace in 616 to prepare an extension up to 721 – all of which meant that in 703 users had entered the last 19-year lunar cycle of the available tables and new ones needed to be composed. Indeed, in the circle of Bede's friend Willibrord, this work was already underway because the table he took to the Continent from Rath Melsigi concluded in 702, and 703 became a useful base point for Easter calculations and continental annals.[13] The earliest extant efforts to establish a correlation between AD and the Eusebian AM dating, both Insular, also appear around this time in a Victorian Easter table of AD 699 and an argumentum of AD 703.[14] Bede's early works on time stand in this context as part of a lively and international debate about Easter tables and chronology, about whether to use Dionysius or Victorius, and how AD and AM dates related to each other, all at a time when future Easters needed to be mapped out by non-Victorian factions. Some of the debate related to apocalyptic thinking about the year 6000,[15] but it is important to recognise that there were many other issues at stake as the whole of Christian time was reconceptualised and recalculated.

---

[13] Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 10837, fol. 44r, which is a single leaf of an Easter table running from AD 684 to AD 702 and likely written in Rath Melsigi in Ireland (D. Ó Cróinín, 'Rath Melsigi, Willibrord, and the earliest Echternach manuscripts', *Peritia*, 3 (1984), 17–49, at 29–30 and Warntjes, *The Munich computus*, xc–xci and n. 242). The first continuation, from AD 703 to AD 759, is on fols 40v–41v. Note also the table-argumentum of 703 in London, British Library, Cotton Caligula A xv, fols 110r–117v – see Warntjes, *The Munich computus*, 311 and 337–8; and J.T. Palmer, 'Computus after the Paschal Controversy of AD 740', in *The Easter controversy*, eds Warntjes and Ó Cróinín, 213–41 at 227–8; and C.W. Jones, 'Two Easter tables', *Speculum*, 13 (1938), 204–5. The best example of annals starting in 703 is *Annales Laureshamenses* (ed. E. Katz, *Annalium Laureshamensium editio*), see page 28. Most other 'minor' annals start in 708 but this would still be within the first 19-year cycle inaugurated by a 703 table (e.g. *Annales Tiliani*, ed. G.H. Pertz, MGH SS 1, at 6, 8). On Willibrord's possible relationship with early annal-keeping see F. Kurze, 'Die karolingischen Annalen des achten Jahrhunderts', *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für Ältere Deutsche Geschichtskunde*, 25 (1900), 293–315 at 296.

[14] '*Victorian prologue*' (ed. Warntjes, 'Newly Discovered Prologue', 271–3) at 271; *Liber de computo* (ed. J.P. Migne PL 129, cols 1273–372), ch. 83, at col. 1314. It is interesting that the synchronisation of AD 703 with AM 5903 is not typical of Iro-Merovingian calculations based on Victorius, which would have considered the year to be AM 5904.

[15] Warntjes, 'A newly discovered prologue', 261 notes the apocalyptic resonance in the '*Victorian prologue*' of 699. Ohashi, 'Victorius', 147–9 suggests that Bede was quiet about Victorius in 664 because of an attempt to be silent about millenarian heresy but this would have been a highly inefficient rhetorical strategy for Bede to use given that he explicitly attacked both Victorius and millenarianism in his writings.

It was in this context that Bede was bogged down in controversy over how much time was left in the future. After he wrote *De temporibus*, he was drawn into a number of conflicts, some public, for his proclamations about a revised age of the world which his opponents, but not Bede, thought relevant to predicting the time of the End. Augustine of Hippo had once pointed out that some lengths of time in the Greek Septuagint and the Hebrew (and therefore the Latin Vulgate) did not match, and it seems that when some scholar(s) in Ireland worked through these mistakes, it was found that 1,257 years could be deducted from the Eusebian reckoning which calculated 5,199 or 5,200 between Creation and the Incarnation.[16] One way or another, steeped in Irish computistical learning, Bede became a leading proponent of this point of view. After he set out his workings in the short chronicle in *De temporibus*, he was apparently accused of heresy at Bishop Wilfrid's table for denying that Christ was born in the Sixth Age (i.e. the sixth millennium). He responded at length in his *Epistola ad Pleguinam* – controversial and notably little circulated compared to his other works – and again in an expanded chronicle-argument in Chapter 66 of *De temporum ratione*, relying like many early medieval chronographers on evidence and numbers rather than simple assertion.[17] Bede's holistic approach to the structures and mysteries of time meant that this was a discussion worth spelling out in full and more than once, but it was a battle.

The problem Bede faced was tradition and authority. In the *Epistola*, Bede referred to an old text by a 'chronographer heresiarch' he had read as a boy, which had proclaimed that there were 5,500 years from Creation to the Incarnation (the eleventh hour), and 300 of the 500 years left after that passed.[18] It is, as Wallis noted, significant that the author was identified as a 'chronographer' rather than any other kind of writer such as an exegete – the structure of time was important to the debate. Bede lamented that he had often had arguments with his brothers (*fratres*), let alone with the rustics (*rustici*), in which the view was expressed that the world would end after 6,000 years or even after 7,000. The '7,000' suggests that Eastern learning was as much in play as conservative Latin ideas, which

[16] Augustine, *De civitate Dei* (eds B. Dombart and A. Kalb, CCSL 47, 48), 15.13 (but complicated by 18.43). D.P. McCarthy, 'Bede's primary source for the Vulgate chronology in his chronicles in *De temporibus* and *De temporum ratione*', in *Computus and its cultural context in the Latin West, AD 300–1200*, eds I. Warntjes and D. Ó Cróinín (Turnhout, 2010), 159–89.

[17] A.A. Mosshammer, *The Easter computus and the origins of the Christian era* (Oxford, 2008). See also P. Verbist, *Duelling with the past: medieval authors and the problem of the Christian era, c. 990–1135* (Turnhout, 2010). For a fuller discussion of *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, see Darby, *Bede and the end of time*, 35–64.

[18] Bede, *Epistola ad Pleguinam* (ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123C, 617–26), 14.

is not surprising given the syllabus of the Canterbury School under Hadrian and Theodore in the late seventh century – which itself may have produced a text, *Laterculus Malalianus*, in which the '7,000 years' were advocated and the 'Irish' preference for placing the Incarnation so early in the world's history was condemned.[19] At least there was likely to be sympathy for the Dionysiac 'Greek' Easter from that corner. On the Continent, it is notable that people adopted Victorius's tables to support the Eusebian age of the world, while supporters of Dionysius tended to proclaim the new 'Hebrew Truth' calculation; and the same could have been true amongst the English.[20] The intertwining of different ideas and texts certainly made challenging any individual elements of chronological tradition hard.

These arguments in the background to *De temporum ratione* are scarcely hidden by Bede, who directed comments at them across the text.[21] In his preface, he mentions how the *fratres* – no doubt the same ones he had been at odds with in the *Epistola* – had 'persuaded me to discuss certain matters concerning the nature, course and end of time'.[22] Several sections of the book were structured around pedagogic devices ensuring its popularity in early medieval classrooms – and yet one might also wonder if part of Bede's original intention was to patronise those peers with whom he fought over matters temporal.[23] There is something barbed about his comment that 'They [the *fratres*] said they [*De natura rerum* and *De temporibus*] were much more concise than they would have wished'.[24] Bede's 'strategic sarcasm' – to use Wallis's phrase – in griping at 'those who do not know how to calculate' later in *De temporum ratione* may also have been

[19] *Laterculus Malalianus* (ed. J. Stevenson, *The 'Laterculus Malalianus' and the school of Archbishop Theodore*), 4; Darby, *Bede and the end of time*, 51–64.

[20] Palmer, 'Calculating time', 1310. See Victorius, *Prologus* (ed. B. Krusch, *Studien zur christlich-mittelalterlichen Chronologie. Die Entstehung unserer heutigen Zeitrechnung*, 17–26), ch. 7. The point is underlined firmly by the Easter table in Leiden, Universiteetsbibliothek, Scaliger 28 (Flavigny, *c.* 816), fols 2r–21v, which contains parallel Dionysiac and Victorian tables, the former annotated with AMIII and the latter AMII.

[21] Bede, *De temporum ratione*, preface; 66, lines 1–47; and 67, lines 1–60.

[22] Bede, *De temporum ratione*, preface, lines 6–7: 'suadebantque mihi latius aliqua de temporum statu, cursu, ac fine disserere'.

[23] On the place of *De temporum ratione* in Bede's teachings see now C.B. Kendall, 'Bede and education', in *The Cambridge companion to Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Cambridge, 2010), 99–112 at 105 and Wallis, 'Bede and science', in *The Cambridge companion to Bede*, ed. DeGregorio, 113–27 at 121–5, especially the comment at 121 that 'the Plegwine episode inspired him to raise the stakes, so to speak, by articulating a vision of *computus* that actually accentuated its theological importance, and confronted the issue of eschatology squarely'.

[24] Bede, *De temporum ratione*, preface, lines 4–5: 'dicebant eos brevius multo digestos esse quam vellent'.

aimed as much at those who should know better rather than just his students in the classroom.[25] Indeed, in discussing leap years and the Zodiac, he later attacks the man 'who did not learn to recognise the constellations in his elementary schooling'.[26] Bede was not just addressing a classroom – he was addressing a disunited intellectual landscape in general. We cannot really imagine that the *amatores Victorini* were his students, nor whoever was the target of his defence of Dionysius over the dating of the Passion.[27] *De temporum ratione* should therefore be understood as a polemic as well as an educational guide.

The context of the arguments in Jarrow should shape how we think about the long world chronicle (Chapter 66) which follows the computistical section of *De temporum ratione*. The way in which Bede outlined the case for the low world age was not so much 'historical writing' as labouring the point that Eusebian chronology was wrong and that therefore recent history needed re-synchronising to a reformed reckoning.[28] As a statement of the idea, the chronicle in *De temporibus* was probably sufficient, but this too must have been 'too brief' for his critics. Bede's efforts to flesh out the Sixth Age were irrelevant for confirming the age of the world itself, yet it had the important function of synchronising various strands of time, including English history and world and Dionysiac chronologies.[29] We must not misunderstand Bede's point here as it relates to apocalypticism. The chronicle was not 'anti-apocalyptic' per se, as Bede had argued that measured time was essentially human and arbitrary in its meaning, so the chronicle proved nothing about apocalyptic expectations except that Bede's enemies had committed a double mistake by misappropriating faulty chronological material.[30] Bede's vision is signalled in the discussion of different forms of time reckoning, in which he follows Irish tradition in dividing time into that in accordance with nature, (human) custom and (divine) authority

---

[25] *De temporum ratione*, 19 entitled 'item de eodem si quis computare non didicit'; Wallis, *Reckoning of Time*, 293. Jones, *Bedae Opera de temporibus*, 135–6 also points out the possibility that *De temporum ratione* was to be used outside the classroom, but steps back from associating the text with the controversies past the preface.

[26] *De temporum ratione*, 38, line 42: 'qui coeli signis intendere puerili in schola non dedicit'.

[27] *De temporum ratione*, 47 and Wallis, *Reckoning of Time*, 336–8. See also Bede's thinly-veiled attack on 'some people' who explain the lunar 19-year cycle through the omission of lunar bissextile days in *De temporibus* (ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123C, 585–611), 11, lines 11–15, meaning Irish computists (*cf. Computus Einsidlensis* – Einsiedeln, Stiftsbibliothek, 321 (647), 82–125 at 114–18; and *The Munich computus*, ch. 60, ed. Warntjes, 256–67).

[28] Compare A. Rabin, 'Historical re-collections: rewriting the world chronicle in Bede's *De temporum ratione*', *Viator*, 36 (2005), 23–39.

[29] Bede, *De temporum ratione*, 66.

[30] Explicitly stated in *De temporum ratione*, 67.

– separating chronology and God's Judgement.[31] Bede could also afford in Chapter 67 to challenge his critics not to read his work, explicitly because it was a matter of human opinion, not doctrine.[32] The chronicle, then, was not an argument about eschatology but more strictly about chronology. Whether it was always understood as such, we shall see later, is doubtful, precisely because of the apocalyptic anxieties of the eighth century and the misappropriation of chronographical material.

The arbitrariness is emphasised throughout the last section of *De temporum ratione*. Chapter 68, specifically, is entitled 'Three *opinions* [*opinationes*] of the faithful as to when the Lord will come' (my emphasis) and, although it is largely an extended quotation from Augustine's letter to Hesychius, it is the part that asserts that whether people expect Judgement sooner or later, they are just guessing and can only be free from error if they proceed with patience.[33] It was not, in other words, his use of the 'Hebrew Truth' which undermined his opponents' beliefs in the world enduring 6,000 years or 7,000, it was the inscrutability of God's plan itself.[34] This extended to the mysteries of Scripture. Daniel, for instance, was understood to have given the reign of Antichrist 1,290 days, but he said that the faithful would have to wait 1,335 days (Daniel 12.11–12).[35] Bede repeated Jerome's hypothetical explanation here: God might decide to test the patience of his saints. Why the difference in the numbers, however, was not certain, and this was the one example introduced by Bede as one of only two 'certain' signs of the End, the other being the conversion of the Jews. As a rhetorical strategy it reinforced Bede's first strong argument against his opponents, which was that there was no Scriptural basis for their beliefs other than a weak inferred parallel between the Creation Week and World Ages.[36] Indeed, Bede left this argument to undermine millenarian beliefs too rather than to repeat his ambiguous Tyconian–Augustinian attack on a literal reading

[31] *De temporum ratione*, 2, which one should compare to *De ratione conputandi* (ed. D. Ó Cróinín, *Cummian's letter 'De controversia Paschali' and 'De ratione conputandi'*), ch. 6 and *Dialogus de computo Langobardiae* (ed. A. Borst, MGH QQ zur Geistesgesch 21.1, 433–61), ch. 8. On the complex web of ideas see F. Wallis, '*Si naturam quaeras*: re-framing Bede's science', in *Innovation and tradition in the writings of the Venerable Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Morgantown, WV, 2006), 65–100, where the stress is on the harmony of the reckonings.

[32] Wallis, *Reckoning of Time*, 367; Bede, *De temporum ratione*, 67 and also preface.

[33] Bede, *De temporum ratione*, 68: 'De trina opinatione fidelium quando veniat Dominus'; Augustine, *Epistola* 199 (ed. A. Goldbacher, CSEL 57, 243–92), ch. 13.

[34] It is natural to compare here Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 18.53, although it is curious that Bede himself did not appeal to the authority of this statement.

[35] *De temporum ratione*, 69, lines 46–58.

[36] *De temporum ratione*, 67, lines 23–34.

of Revelation 20.4–7, which prophesied a thousand-year long reign of Christ and his saints.[37]

Bede's arguments were philosophically far-reaching. While he was not advocating the view that the future was indefinitely open-ended, he felt that it was important to remain agnostic about time's relationship with infinity as well as its End. In Ireland, '*saeculum*', the word most commonly used for 'World Age', was defined by a false etymology from the cultivation of six (*sex* and *colo*), but also as a representation of infinity.[38] This is in a limited sense consistent with Augustine's Tyconian interpretation of Scripture: 'certainly a thousand years stands for all the years of this *saeculum*, so that, by a perfect number, the fullness of time is denoted'.[39] It is observed in other Irish treatises, in both the *Munich computus* and *De ratione conputandi*, but another sense is teased out by the author of the *Dialogus de computo Langobardiae*: 'With the completion of the world, there will not be seasons, but eternity without movement, just as there was before this, before it was, before the world came into being'.[40] Such comments resonate with Bede's words at the end of *De temporum ratione* when, having discussed how there will be no tempestuous sea at the Last Judgement, he wrote 'so our little book concerning the fleeting and wave-tossed course of time comes to a fitting end in eternal stability and stable eternity'.[41]

---

[37] See Bede's *Expositio Apocalypseos* (ed. R. Gryson, CCSL 121A), 35, lines 53–9, in which he repeats the Tyconian–Augustinian line that the thousand years begins with Christ and, in a beautifully ambiguous phrase, 'by a certain manner is congruent with this present time' ('modo quodam tempori huic congruo') – thus not clearly ruling out an apocalyptic Y1K. See J. Fried, 'Die Endzeit fest im Griff des Positivismus? Zur Auseinandersetzung mit Sylvain Gouguenheim', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 275 (2002), 281–321 at 311.

[38] Compare Isidore, *Etymologiae* (ed. W.M. Lindsay, *Etymologiarum siue originum libri XX*), 5.38.1: 'Saecula generationibus constant; et inde saecula, quod se sequantur: abeuntibus enim aliis alia succedunt'. See also Alcuin, *Epistola* 163 (ed. E. Dümmler, MGH Epp. 4, 263–5).

[39] Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, 20.7, lines 64–5: 'certe mille annos pro annis omnibus huius saeculi posuit, ut perfecto numero notaretur ipsa temporis plentitudo'. Compare also Primasius, *Commentarius in Apocalypsin* (ed. A.W. Adams, CCSL 92), 5.20, lines 1–31 where Primasius relates this to the problem of 6,000 years.

[40] *Dialogus de computo Langobardiae*, 4: 'Et consummato saeculo non erunt tempora, sed aeternitas erit sine motu, sicut antea fuit, antequam fuit, antequam fieret saeculum'. *The Munich computus*, 43; *De ratione conputandi*, 60. Note also Hrabanus Maurus, *De computo* (ed. W.M. Stevens, CCCM 44, 205–321), 95.

[41] Bede, *De temporum ratione*, 71, lines 91–3: 'ergo noster libellus de volubili ac fluctiuago temporum lapsu descriptus oportunum de aeterna stabilitate ac stabili aeternitate habeat finem'. For the metaphor of the sea compare also Gregory the Great, *Registrum epistularum*, 9.228 (to Leander of Seville), another letter to Leander of Seville preserved at the beginning of Gregory's

Bede's thinking here was not exactly in line with Augustine's.[42] After his Augustinian assault in *De temporum ratione*, Bede took time in Chapter 70 to outline his view that the upper heavens and their celestial bodies would not be destroyed, only the Earth and its atmosphere. As Wallis rightly surmised, '[s]ince the Sun and Moon are within the world of time, and essentially the reckoners of time, Bede's insistence on their survival must say something about the relationship of time to eternity ... Creation, and even time, are caught up into eternity, not destroyed by it'.[43] Yet Augustine had been at pains to divorce the mysteries of time from the measurement of the heavens. Time was essentially something which the soul experienced internally and subjectively; the Moon could (in theory) stand still without time stopping. In Ireland, carried along by a post-Isidorian concern for order, the intellectual framework was quite different. Natural and artificial reckonings of time were given centre stage – indeed, Easter calculations were impossible otherwise. The Irish Augustine, writing in 654, even appealed to Easter tables to undermine Augustine's use of Joshua 10.13 to deny that time resided in the movements of the Heavens.[44] To close a treatise on the science of time with consideration of Judgement and eternity was natural in such a context.

There are, then, a number of things we must bear in mind about *De temporum ratione* which make it more than just a defence of Augustinian orthodoxy about time. Understandings of the nature of *calculated* time amongst the English and Irish were fundamentally different to Augustine's, being locked into models which were recognisably artificial, linear and grounded in nature. Perhaps the illusion of objectivity which dogged modern chronography struck and some people thought that measured time represented hard truths about the mystery of time too. Bede then found himself arguing about the relative merits of three different Easter tables, three different calculations of the world's age and the importance of employing Tyconian exegesis rather than literal interpretations of scripture. Bede developed *De temporum ratione* in a context which made it controversial, and in which it was intended as a polemic against his opponents. Perhaps this partially explains the curious history of *De temporum ratione* in

Moralia in Iob (ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL 143, 1–7) and Boniface, *Epistolae* 33 (ed. M. Tangl, MGH Epp. sel. 1, 56–8), at 57.

[42] See Peter Darby's contribution to this collection, Chapter 5.

[43] Wallis, *Reckoning of Time*, 372–3.

[44] Compare Augustinus Hibernicus, *De mirabilibus sacrae scripturae* (ed. J.P. Migne, PL 35, cols 2149–200), 2.4 and Augustine of Hippo, *Confessiones* (ed. L. Verheijen, CCSL 27), 11.23.30. See also Warntjes, *The Munich computus*, 308–9, plus a useful overview of scholarship on the *De mirabilibus* at lxxviii–lxxix (n. 209).

England, where Eusebian chronology did not retreat and *De temporum ratione* itself eventually had to be re-imported from the continent – Bede's victory was far from absolute and immediate.[45] Indeed, as we shall see next, it fared only marginally better on the continent, which only serves to highlight further the complex and contestable intellectual environment into which *De temporum ratione* fed.

De temporum ratione Abroad

By 760 *De temporum ratione* was established amongst the authoritative sources for time-reckoning and was later even recommended to Charlemagne by Alcuin.[46] The popularity of *De temporum ratione* on the continent means that we are in an unusually strong position to gauge its reception. Even so, the end of the text is in many ways so varied that it also provides a case study in the creativity of Carolingian scriptoria. We have more than 57 extant manuscripts from the eighth and ninth centuries, all of which were either sent across the Channel or else were copied on the continent.[47] Unfortunately, as Jones noted in 1943, it is nearly impossible to produce a 'scientific group' because of 'the early and constant conflation'.[48] Indeed, conflation is often so rife that it shows many centres would not settle for one exemplar if two or more would do.[49] *De*

[45] Jones, *Bedae Opera de temporibus*, 142. There are few early English manuscripts which indicate chronographical preference but Eusebius is preferred in London, British Library, Cotton Vespasian B vi, fols 104–9 at fols 105r and 107r; and Oxford, Bodleian Library, Digby 63, fols 26r and 27r (copied at least in part from a continental exemplar).

[46] *Lectiones sive regula conputi* (ed. A. Borst, MGH QQ zur Geistesgesch 21.2, 544–659), 2.6, 5.3B. 5.4B, [5.12B], at 577, 605–6 and [613]; Alcuin, *Epistola* 155 (ed. E. Dümmler, MGH Epp. 4, 249–53), at 250. Bede's authority was also invoked in the 809 Aachen investigation into computus: *Capitula, de quibus convocati compotiste interrogati fuerint* (ed. A. Borst, MGH QQ zur Geistesgesch 21.3, 1040–53), 2, at 1041.

[47] Figure following J. Westgard, 'Bede and the Continent in the Carolingian Age and beyond', in *The Cambridge companion to Bede*, ed. DeGregorio, 201–15, at 211. Many of the manuscripts referred to can be consulted online including: Cologne, Dombibliothek (www.ceec.uni-koeln.de/), Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek (digital.blb-karlsruhe.de/Handschriften/), London, British Library (www.bl.uk/manuscripts), Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek (www.europeanaregia.eu), St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek (e-codices.ch) and Valenciennes, Bibliothèque municipale (bibliotheque.valenciennes.fr).

[48] Jones, *Bedae Opera de temporibus*, 142.

[49] A good example is the tenth-century Limoges copy in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 5239 (Limoges, s. x), which was copied from Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 5543 (Fleury, 847 if the note on fol. 120r is original rather than copied) but modified on the basis of a manuscript

temporum ratione travelled, and one wonders if Charlemagne's command for schools to teach computus in 789 had a deep influence here.[50] Jones himself could not establish more than some impressionistic groupings, and he did not take Chapters 66–71 into account because that was not the part of the text with which he was dealing. Mommsen's edition is not always so helpful, as he only used three manuscripts for the last section of the chronicle and the subsequent chapters.[51] In order to get a sense of the fate of the historical and apocalyptic sections of *De temporum ratione*, it is essential to return to the manuscripts to see how the text was treated.

Several factors make analysis uncertain. There are, for a start, a number of instances in which a manuscript has simply been damaged or broken up, or the scribe just stopped or copied from an incomplete exemplar in the first place.[52] One can judge little from such cases, and only a little more from times in which someone tracked down another exemplar to make good the losses (one can, at least, not explain why some manuscripts were left in poor repair).[53] More than once, *De temporum ratione* was considered not just a good classroom text but also an interesting candidate for a scriptorium to practice copying, with multiple hands filling in only a couple of folios each.[54] In such a context it is hard to be sure

from a different family – see Jones, *Bedae Opera de temporibus*, 155. Description in Borst, MGH QQ zur Geistesgesch 21.1, 269–71.

[50] *Admonitio generalis* (ed. A. Boretius, MGH Capit. 1, 52–62), ch. 72. I have been unable to consult the new edition by Hubert Mordek and Michael Glatthaar.

[51] Mommsen, MGH Auct. ant. 13, 224 and 231. These were Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Phill. 1831 (Verona, *c*. 800), St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 251 (St Gall, s. ixmid) and BAV, Ottob. 67 (S. Dionisius Luni, 978).

[52] The scribe just seems to stop in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, nouv. acq. 1612 (Tours, s. ix), fol. 22r after the entry for Julian the Apostate but with space to spare on the page. London, British Library, Harley 3091 (prov. Nevers, s. ix^2) stops mid-sentence at the end of fol. 128v (=*De temporum ratione*, 67, line 25) with Bede's *In Regum librum XXX quaestiones* on the next page. See also the examples in the next note.

[53] Examples of texts being added to later include Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, pal. lat. 1449 (Lorsch, s. ix^1 or, so Borst, MGH QQ zur Geistesgesch 21.1, 300, *c*. 812 because it includes no reformed computus), with Chapters 1–65 at fols 26v–104r, with the rest added later at fols 121r–145r; and Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, nouv. acq. lat. 1632 (prov. Orléans, s. ix^1), in which Chapters 68–71 were added on fols 66v–67v in another hand after the earlier scribe had stopped after Chapter 66a.

[54] Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 7296 (see n. 60) and lat. 13013 (s. ix, Auxerre, as confirmed by the highlighted feast of St Germanus in the calendar on fol. 4v) are both good illustrations of this, and both contain sections influenced by insular majuscule and minuscule. For a similar use of Hrabanus Maurus's *De computo* (819/20), see W.M. Stevens, 'Fulda scribes at work: Bodleian Library Manuscript Canonici Miscellaneous 353', *Bibliothek und Wissenschaft*, 8 (1982), 287–316.

whether an apparent omission or trimming is anything more than an oversight. Not every user group was as creatively arbitrary as the Tours scriptorium when the scribes continued *De temporum ratione* from Chapter 52 onwards because the team had already copied 51 chapters of *De natura rerum*.[55] Many nevertheless excerpted sections from the book, often blending it with other material or simply reordering the text.[56] The presence of multiple copies in a single library or network could also affect attitudes towards the text. There was, for example, a tenth-century copy of *De temporum ratione* from St Gall in which everything after Chapter 65 is omitted – but then there were already two full copies to hand, and the scribe chose to add further computistical notes instead of the long chronicle and eschatological thoughts.[57] *De temporum ratione* entered a world, in other words, in which texts were often organic, unstable things.

Some early mistakes and habits seemed difficult to avoid. It is, for instance, striking just how often scribes found it difficult to accurately number the last parts of the text. Whether they contained the whole text or not, almost all early manuscripts listed 72 chapters after the preface rather than the 71 chapters of Mommsen's edition because the chronicle and its preface are counted as two

---

[55] Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, nouv. acq. lat. 1612 (Tours, s. ix$^{1/2}$), the division falling at fol. 7r, where an early reader has noted that all of *De temporibus* and the greater part of *De temporum ratione* are missing.

[56] London, British Library, Harley 3017, fols 165r–168v (Jones, *Bedae Opera de temporibus*, 152 'Fleury' but Bischoff more cautiously 'Frankreich, IX. Jh., ca. 3. Viertel', *Katalog der festländischen Handschriften des neunten Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden, 1998), II.118), Chapters 48, 50, 51 and 56 only, in no way identified with Bede nor distinguished from other computistical excerpts in that section of the manuscript. Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, pal. lat. 1448, fols 1r–60r (Trier, 810), at fols 45r–59r, Chapters 2–46 with truncations; fols 60r–122v (Mainz, s. ixmid), at fols 92r–104v, Chapters 44–62 less Chapter 51, as an undifferentiated extension of an untitled *De temporibus*, with alterations copied from an exemplar of 758 (e.g. fol. 99r), and added material from the *Libri computi* of 809 afterwards again with distinction. An important early witness with a thoroughly rearranged text is Cologne, Dombibliothek, MS 83ii, fols 86r–125v, written in 805 to judge by an addition to the *Ars computi* on fol. 55r (not clear from the edition of A. Borst, MGH QQ zur Geistesgesch 21.2, 945–6, where one has to refer back to n. 107 on 935) and in the library of Archbishop Hildebold of Cologne (fol. 1r).

[57] St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 459, 143–346 (St Gall, s. x). The earlier St Gall copies are Cod. Sang. 248, 99–212 (99–148 = an eleventh-century copy of Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, Aug. perg. 167 (see below, n. 61), but 149–212 are written in a ninth-century St Gall minuscule – see Jones, *Bedae Opera de temporibus*, 156) and Cod. Sang. 251, 45–181 (St Gall, s. ixmid). See A. Cordoliani, 'Les manuscrits de comput ecclésiastique de l'Abbaye de Saint Gall du VIIIe au XIIe siècle', *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Kirchengeschichte*, 49 (1955), 161–200 and in the same volume 'L'évolution du comput ecclésiastique à Saint Gall du VIIIe au XIe siècle', 288–324.

chapters: 'lxvi de sex huius saeculi aetatibus' and 'lxvii de cursu earundem'.[58] Nevertheless, mistakes and other factors mean that the chapters are not consistent. It was poor numbering and/or chapter switching which Jones used as the basis for his 'German' family ϒ and the subsets Σ (inversions of pairs of capitula) and Ω (inversions of whole chapter pairs). Although the text of the end is relatively stable by comparison, a number of witnesses to Ω (and indeed Σ, Ψ and Π) also show mistakes in numbering the final chapters so that the capitula only go up to lxx, usually with a double-numbering of lxviii.[59] Meanwhile, friends and relatives of Ψ – which omit Chapter 15 'de mensibus Anglorum' perhaps because it was of less interest to Irish or Frankish readers – tend to be the only witnesses which divide the text into 71 chapters like the modern edition.[60] The ends of *De temporum ratione* have their own little groups, then, even though they only sometimes correspond neatly to the groups of the first sections of the work.

Once we get past the initial difficulties of behaviour in scriptoria and libraries, the best indication of the treatment of *De temporum ratione* lies in the uneven treatment of the chronicle (Chapter 66). The manuscript known as the Karlsruhe Bede contained *De temporum ratione* up to and including Chapter 65, but the scribe omitted the chronicle and everything thereafter and included instead the short chronicle from Isidore of Seville's *Etymologiae* with its traditional 'Septuagint' dating of the world.[61] It is difficult to read this as anything other than a bald rejection of Bede's argumentation on this front; and indeed the scribe might not have been alone in editing out the chronicle for this reason, even if he were unusual in offering a replacement.[62] Indeed, in

[58] Two exceptions are the Karlsruhe Bede, on which see n. 61 and Valenciennes, Bibliothèque municipale, 343, fol. 85v (St Amand, s. ix[4]), which lists 67 chapters but includes the full text.

[59] Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek, M. p. th. f. 46 (Ω, St Amand, 800); Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Phill. 1831 (Ω, *c.* 800); Leiden, Universiteetsbibliothek, Scaliger 28 (Ω, Flavigny, *c.* 816); Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, nouv. acq. lat. 1615 (Π, Auxerre then Fleury, 820/30), St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 251 (Σ, St Gall, mid s. ix) and Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ottob. lat. 67 (Ψ, S. Dionisius Luni, 978).

[60] The lead witness to this family is Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 7296. It is commonly dated to s. ix[1] but I am not aware that any provenance has been suggested. The mix of scripts indicates a centre with strong Anglo-Saxon and Irish influences.

[61] Karlsruhe, Landesbibliothek, Aug. perg. 167, with the chronicle on fols 46r–47v. Curiously the capitula at the beginning list 65 chapters but a later ninth-century hand has added the missing titles for Chapters 66–72 (fol. 23v) even though they were not then copied.

[62] A kindred spirit might perhaps be found in Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, pal. lat. 1448, fol. 18r (Trier, 810), which contains a clear rejection of the 'Hebrew Truth' reckoning shortly before the chronicle-less *De temporum ratione*. The text is edited as *Series annorum mundi secundum antiquos patres* by A. Borst, MGH QQ zur Geistesgesch 21.2, 1015–

one compilation of abbreviated chronicles from Tours, one reader felt moved to warn the 'prudent calculator' (*prudens calculator*) to prefer Bede's teachings in the face of a product apparently otherwise put together in deference to the calculation of Eusebius.[63] The monks of Reichenau, where the Karlsruhe Bede was made, seem to have been particularly interested in the Septuagint reckoning and provided one of few ninth-century efforts to correlate it to AD-dating up to 848.[64] Indeed here we have the only explicit, focused correlation of AM 6000 with AD 800, although the distance of composition from that date suggests that it was more about policing chronographical tradition than *ex post defectu* confusion in apocalyptic tradition.[65] The fate of *De temporum ratione* here seems to have been bound up with wider arguments about chronology in the Frankish Empire, which had reached a high point in 809 with the Carolingian championing of the 'Hebrew Truth' – 'ours', they said possessively – and a small wave of conservative resistance in places such as Trier and St Gall where they maintained the Eusebian reckoning.[66]

20, which Borst characterises as part of a 'protest' at 1009. Another possible candidate would be Cologne, Dombibliothek, 83ii, fols 76r–79r (as n. 56) which omits Bede's chronicle and world age, but includes the Eusebian reckoning at several points throughout the compilation.

[63] Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, nouv. acq. lat. 1613, fol. 8r; printed in Mommsen, MGH Auct. ant. 13, 719. Thanks to Richard Landes for reminding me of the importance of this note. Compare it to the clumsy labelling of the 'Cologne Notice', in which the Eusebian reckoning is mislabelled 'hebraica veritas' and a (confused) 'Greek' reckoning is labelled 'Septuagint': *Additamenta Coloniensia ad chronica* (ed. A. Borst, MGH QQ zur Geistesgesch 21.2, 780–94), 2.3 (at 793–4). See Landes, 'Apocalyptic Expectations', 189–90 in which Prof. Landes sees such clumsiness as a 'flagrant misrepresentation'. Palmer, 'Calculating time', 1328–9, is less sure.

[64] Karlsruhe, Landesbibliothek, Aug. perg. 167, fol. 15r ('VI ab initio mundi'); Landes, 'Apocalyptic Expectations', 198 and n. 235. Further evidence can be found in the footnotes to *Lectiones sive regula conputi*, 3.1, ed. A. Borst, MGH QQ zur Geistesgesch 21.2, 585.

[65] The correlation is also made in Cologne, Dombibliothek, 83ii, fol. 76v, but does so as part of a sequence of years starting from 798 and as such it does not 'highlight' 800=6000. For a non-apocalyptic interpretation of the start date, see now I. Warntjes, 'Köln als naturwissenschaftliches Zentrum in der Karolingerzeit: Die frühmittelalterliche Kölner Schule und der Beginn der fränkischen Komputistik', in *Mittelalterliche Handschriften der Kölner Dombibliothek*, eds H. Finger and H. Horst (Cologne, 2012), 41–96. My thanks to Dr Warntjes for supplying me with a copy of this in advance of publication.

[66] *Libri computi* (ed. A. Borst, MGH QQ zur Geistesgesch 21.3, 1087–1334), 1.7C, at 1122; and the inquisition of 809, ch. 4: 'qui cum propter diversorum auctoritates primum diversa protulissent postremo in Ebraice veritatis numero fidem facere censuerunt'. Conservative responses in Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, pal. lat. 1448, fol. 19r and the computus in St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 902, 153–79 (St Gall, s. ix^{3}). A copy can also be found in St Gall, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. Sang. 251, 1–25 (St Gall, s. ix^{3}). For criticism of Borst's reconstruction of the *Libri computi* and its context see Palmer, 'Calculating time', 1320–24.

In some cases the chronicle became a device for comparing different reckonings, as it was adapted into a 'Chronicle of 741'.[67] In Flavigny around 816 this chronicle was used in its entirety as a substitute for Bede's own in *De temporum ratione*, although the last chapters were kept in place.[68] The 'Chronicle of 741' used Bede extensively as source material but added numerous passages relevant to Frankish history, including at the end a handful of annalistic entries – from the *Annales S. Maximiniani* – up to the death of Charles Martel in 741, hence the chronicle's modern name.[69] But this was about more than political or national historiography-cum-propaganda, given the technical computistical setting. The chronicle's chronographical charms lay in its parallel (but inaccurate) use of the Septuagint and Hebrew Truth world dates and so also in its comparison of different traditions.[70] This can also be said of its treatment of the tables of Victorius of Aquitaine and Dionysius Exiguus, whose works were compared in the same Flavigny manuscript both in table form and in the text of the chronicle.[71] *De temporum ratione* was useful in the context of debate because it provided a forum in which diverse reckonings of time could be synchronised. But even the Chronicle of 741 was adaptable and in another manuscript witness, from Weltenburg around the same time, a 'looser' version of the chronicle was

---

[67] *Chronicon universale – 741* (ed. G. Waitz, MGH SS 13, 4–19). The most recent study is R. McKitterick, *Perceptions of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, IN, 2006), 23–8. Dr Sören Kaschke promises a new study soon.

[68] This is not apparent from Jones's discussion, in which the Leiden manuscript is listed as 'very similar' to Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Phill. 1831 (Jones, *Bedae Opera de temporibus*, 152) and the likely exemplar for Besançon, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 186, both of which contain Bede's own chronicle again (Jones, *Bedae Opera de temporibus*, 150). Conflation must be at work. As Mommsen showed ('Zur Weltchronik vom J. 741', *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für Ältere Deutsche Geschichtskunde*, 22 (1897), 548–53), the closest relative is Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, nouv. acq. lat. 1615 as both contain alterations in *De temporum ratione* to an *annus praesens* of 800/1, although other changes suggest they share a common exemplar. The chronicle in the Paris manuscript includes interpolations from the Chronicle of 741 but it ends where Bede's ends.

[69] It seems unlikely that the chronicle was composed in 741. G.H. Waitz, 'Zur Geschichtschreibung der Karolingischen Zeit', *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für Ältere Deutsche Geschichtskunde*, 5 (1880), 475–502 at 487–8 points out that it must post-date the extended Fredegar chronicle it quotes – in his view written in 768 but recently redated to 787 by Roger Collins (*Die Fredegar-Chroniken*, MGH Texte und Studien 44 (Hannover, 2007), 91–2), which in fact complements Waitz's thesis that it was begun in the 780s as a supplement to the *Annales regni Francorum*, the first year of which is 741.

[70] See for instance the equation of AD 731 with 4600 'secundum Hebreos' and 5900 'secundum septuaginta': *Chronicon universale – 741*, 19.

[71] Most recent comment in Warntjes, 'A newly discovered prologue', 269–70.

presented as a 'book of chronicles from various little works of authors, collected together into one' (*liber chronicorum ex diversis opusculis auctorum collecta in unum*), with prefaces from Eusebius, Bede and Isidore.[72] In this instance of historiography, it also seems that keeping the last chapters of *De temporum ratione* made sense as a future-historical conclusion, as they were kept in full.[73]

Keeping track of the flow of the past into the present using *De temporum ratione* was widespread. There were, for a start, other instances in which historical notes were added to the end of *De temporum ratione*, after Chapter 71.[74] Moreover, a précis of the text was made in 807, which Garipzanov has plausibly associated with the celebration of the 38th year of Charlemagne's reign, in imitation of Augustus's 38 years.[75] This text was then revised two years later as part of the computistical investigations of 809, and this version became one of the most copied chronicles of the Carolingian period. Both versions reduced the chronological material so that there were no references to the *Annus Mundi* until the very end, after a long list of emperors and the lengths of their reigns – effectively more a regnal or imperial list than a history. (The chronicle here silently legitimised the Carolingian dynasty's imperial status by making Pippin II follow on from Justinian II – although if it were 'propaganda' it was only really for monks interested in computus).[76] It was not, however, directly associated with Bede in the manuscripts, and from time to time it travelled alongside *De temporum ratione* or its chronicle.[77] Once, in Fleury in 847, the

---

[72] Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 246 (Bischoff, *Katalog*, no. 2924, II.221, 'wahrscheinlich Weltenburg, IX Jh., ca. Mitte').

[73] There is 'conflation' or a missing link here too, as the texts of the chronicle and *De temporum ratione* contain variations.

[74] For instance what seems to be an expanded translation of Nikephoros of Constantinople's *Kronikon* in Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Phill. 1831, 89v (ed. Mommsen, MGH Auct. ant. 13, 342–3) alongside two other variations. These can be compared to the simpler Greek version in London, British Library, Add. MS 1930, fols 22r–22v (in my case with much-appreciated help from Dr Tim Greenwood). See also London, British Library, Cotton Vespasian, B vi, fol. 102v (popes, emperors and Frankish kings up to Louis the Younger).

[75] I. Garipzanov, 'The Carolingian abbreviation of Bede's world chronicle and Carolingian imperial "genealogy"', *Hortus Artium Medievalium*, 11 (2005), 291–8. The text is most recently edited as '*Die ostfränkische Ahnentafel von 807*' or '*Series annorum mundi nova*' by A. Borst, MGH QQ zur Geistesgesch 21.2, 971–1008. The title 'Laterculus Bedanus' is given in MGH Auct. ant. 13, 346–7, with discussion of differences from Bede's text.

[76] There were also regnal lists which included the Merovingians: see E. Ewig, 'Die fränkischen Königskataloge und der Aufstieg der Karolinger', *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters*, 51 (1995), 1–28.

[77] Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, nouv. acq. lat. 1615, fols 19r–126v (*De temporum ratione*) and fols 171r–172v (abbreviated chronicle); Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 4860, fols 77v–88r

Adbrevatio chronicae was copied after the text of *De temporibus* complete with its brief chronicle, which may explain why the scriptorium did not waste resources on copying the *De temporum ratione* chronicle as well.[78] The other resources of a library have to be taken into account, as discussed above. Nevertheless, the crucial point, again, is that Bede had supplied the base material for understanding the passage of authority through time up to a present with an undefined future.

Cases in which the end of *De temporum ratione* appeared as a separate text, as in the Weltenburg manuscript, are rare. Nevertheless, there is unambiguous evidence that some readers considered everything after Chapter 65 to be separate in subject to computus. In a Cologne copy of 795, for example, a firm explicit is given after Chapter 65 but before the rest of the text.[79] Although it is all complete, the chronological and apocalyptic material at the end was effectively cast as another work – or perhaps, as a different reader, possibly in Orléans, put it, it formed 'the second part of this book'.[80] The Laon-Metz glosses, written in 873/4, followed this opinion.[81] What was left, they said, was about human actions and the end of time, so effectively dealing with the two forms of time other than that determined by nature. In Mainz, the chronicle was copied out with none of the accompanying material, but placed alongside other world chronicles (and later providing material for Marianus Scottus's revision of chronology in the eleventh

(*De temporum ratione*, Chapters 66–7 only) and fols 88r–89r. Considering how many copies of *Adbrevatio chronicae* there are it is perhaps surprising that their paths did not cross more often.

[78] Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 5543, fols 91r–93v.

[79] Cologne, Dombibliothek, MS 103, fol. 140r: EXPLICIT LIBER DE TEMPORIBUS QUEM UIR HUIUS TEMPORIS ERUDITISSIMUS BAEDA ANGLORUM PRESBITER FAMULUS CHRISTI ROGATUS A FRATRIBUS CONPOSUIT ('Here ends the Book on Times which the most erudite man of these times, Bede, priest of the English, servant of Christ, composed having been asked by the brothers'). The designation 'Anglorum' suggests this is a continental addition. The manuscript was in the library of Archbishop Hildebold of Cologne (fol. 1r). The date of 795 comes from an annalist's note on fol. 15r: A. van Euw, 'Beda Venerabilis: Naturlehre, historiographische und zeitrechnerische Werke (Dom Hs. 103)', in *Glaube und Wissen im Mittelalter. Die Kölner Dombibliothek*, eds J. Plotzek and U. Surmann (Munich, 1998), 29–135 at 129.

[80] Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, nouv. acq. 1632, fol. 9v. The Bedan section of manuscript (1r–67v) was certainly in Orléans, but since it was composed separately to the rest of the manuscript it is difficult to maintain that it was definitely written there. Compare also the treatment in a second Cologne manuscript, Dombibliothek, MS 102, from the tenth century, in which sections from Bede's *De natura rerum* and related materials are inserted at fols 49r–52v between the end of *De temporum ratione*, Chapter 65 and the last section on fols 53r–94r.

[81] See the gloss to Bede, *De temporum ratione*, pref., line 7 (ed. Jones, CCSL 123B, 263). On the glosses see Jones, CCSL 123B, 257–61 and Wallis, *Reckoning of Time*, xciii–xciv.

century).[82] Finally, an eleventh-century copy from Moissac provides both a rare instance in which the apocalypse chapters were copied alone without the chronicle, and the earliest case in which any of *De temporum ratione* was paired with Pseudo-Methodius's popular *Sermo de regnum gentium et in novissimis temporibus certa demonstratio*, a non-Augustinian apocalyptic text translated into Latin in Bede's lifetime.[83] Again, the separability of Bede's arguments seems to underpin the use here, highlighting how *De temporum ratione* lent itself to being carved up.

Even so, finding any substantial Carolingian reflection on Bede's eschatology is rare. The copy of *De temporum ratione* from Orléans just mentioned is one exception because it is prefaced by an additional page-long note in front of Bede's preface.[84] Interestingly, considering the arguments Bede faced at home, the author seemed little concerned with matters of chronology. What mattered was the power of Bede's computistical system to overcome the instability of the world. The 'course of times' (*cursus temporum*) was so-called, s/he argued, because of the way in which human deeds moved through the six ages of the world; but, at the end, the extremes of want, conflict and time itself would be flattened out.[85] Reflections of earthly experience, in other words, would be dissolved in the bliss of eternity. The author praised Bede's thoughts on what would follow with the seventh and eighth ages: 'he set them out most eloquently' (*eligentissime exposuit*). Yet while the Laon-Metz glossator appropriated the thoughts of the Orléans preface here, it is striking that the chronicle and

---

[82] Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 4860 (Mainz, *c*. 900). On Marianus's use of the text, see C.P.E. Nothaft, 'An eleventh-century chronologer at work: Marianus Scottus and the quest for the missing 22 Years', *Speculum*, 88 (2013), 457–82, which I am grateful to have been allowed to consult pre-publication.

[83] Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, lat. 4871, fols 113r–160v, provenance Moissac according to the note above the library catalogue on fol. 160v, likely s. xi$^{1/2}$. *De temporum ratione*, Chapters 66–71 at 149r–151r, with Pseudo-Methodius following to 153r. For Pseudo-Methodius: W.J. Aerts and G.A.A. Kortekaas (eds), *Die Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius. Die ältesten griechischen und lateinischen Übersetzungen* (2 vols, Leuven, 1998), which forms the basis for the texts and translations in B. Garstad's *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* (Cambridge, MA, 2012). Both Clemens Gantner and myself have detailed studies of the text's Latin history forthcoming, supplementing the important study of H. Möhring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit. Entstehung, Wandel und Wirkung einer tausendjährigen Weissagung* (Stuttgart, 2000), 54–103 and 136–43.

[84] Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, nouv. acq. 1632, fol. 9v – curiously with no break or heading before Bede's preface to *De temporum ratione*, which begins across the page on f. 10r.

[85] 'Nemo laborabit quia nemo indigebit. Nemo contendet quia nullus adversarius erit. Nemo cogitabit ignarus quia nullus nisi sapiens erit. Nemo horas et momenta et caeteros temporum articulos distinguet quia omnia praentia simul'.

apocalypse chapters were little glossed compared to the rest of the text.[86] It is rare to find commentators on things apocalyptic appealing to Bede's thoughts in non-computistical settings.[87] In the final reckoning, Bede's influence on the eschatology of the 'Bedan Carolingians' was far from absolute and the nature of the future remained open to debate.

Conclusion

Bede's thoughts in *De temporum ratione* brought together a variety of strands which showed the intersections of computus, history and apocalyptic thought. This was not, however, a simple exercise in juxtaposition for school children and clerics who needed to learn all about these things. Bede's division of time into natural, customary and divine made a clear rhetorical point – completely in step with his Irish peers – about the imperfect relationship between different spheres of understanding as well as their interconnectivity. Although he could not completely divorce them from each other, it was essential for him to be able to draw distinctions. His opponents needed to understand their compounded mistakes: their trust in dubious authorities such as Victorius of Aquitaine, and their misappropriation of faulty chronographical material to prophesy the end of time. The computistical 'first book', the chronicle, and the apocalypse chapters therefore served different ends, each correcting the errors of his opponents on different fronts. Bede's point was not so much about the harmony of these reckonings, but the need to understand the relationships between them so that one did not make weak inferences on the basis of, say, human calculations of time and God's plans for the timing of Judgement. At that level, *De temporum ratione* was less a school book and more a polemic against people in Wearmouth-Jarrow, and perhaps as far afield as Canterbury and Ireland, who held alternative points of view and criticised Bede and his friends.

The reception of *De temporum ratione* on the continent reveals the difficulties Bede had in maintaining such an argument. Copying, editing and excerpting

[86] One of few interesting glosses I have encountered is in Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Phill. 1869, fol. 134v (Prüm, *c.* 840), where the name Antichrist has been glossed 'videlicet persecutionem'.

[87] For example, Bede's two certain signs of the End – the conversion of the Jews and the coming of Antichrist (*De temporum ratione*, 69) – is only repeated by Alcuin, *De fide sanctae et individuae trinitatis* (ed. J.P. Migne, PL 101, cols 9–64), 3.19, at col. 51. It could, however, be that it informed Adso's attitudes to the apocalyptic conversion of the Jews in the Pseudo-Methodian end section of his *De ortu et tempore Antichristi* (ed. D. Verhelst, CCCM 45, 20–30), lines 151–95.

had the power to blunt Bede's message, even though such activities could be carried out without that intention, as clearly happened in scribal practice or the compilation of new computistical handbooks or chronicles. But sometimes, as the Karlsruhe Bede and the 'Chronicle of 741' show, *De temporum ratione* could *become* the battleground, as traditions clashed and the text was changed accordingly. In these instances, the problem was whether to maintain the authority of Eusebius-Jerome or to follow the Iro-Bedan model. Even then, however, many of the defenders of Eusebian tradition mounted their attacks after the passing of Y6K, which begs the question of whether they found Bede's 'indefinite imminence' objectionable or just his chronology. What Carolingian scholars were left with was a resource that helped them to map out the future, both through the liturgical rhythm of Easter and the linear passage of human actions from the present into the past as each year became part of history itself. Marking time was important, Bede had taught them; but it did not tell anyone the exact shape or duration of the time yet to come.

Chapter 7

Christology and the Future in Bede's *Annus Domini*[1]

Máirín Mac Carron

Bede's adoption of *Anno Domini* (AD) as the over-arching chronological structure for his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* was a major step towards the widespread acceptance of this method of counting years – nowadays often referred to as Common Era (CE). Bede did not 'invent' *Annus Domini* as a method for measuring time; he appropriated it from the Easter tables of Dionysius Exiguus and fused it to narrative history in his *Historia ecclesiastica*. Bertram Colgrave regarded this as Bede's main contribution to historical writing.[2] Bede's innovative achievement was inspired by his understanding of chronology and theology, and his adroitness in combining both to create a synthetic account of his people's history. Most treatments of Bede and AD have focused on his place in the chronological tradition or the accuracy of his dates.[3] The following will examine where and how Bede used AD in his corpus in general and in the *Historia ecclesiastica* in particular. The essay will argue that AD years for Bede were more than a coherent chronological system capable of underlying a straightforward narrative of his people's past: rather, AD was loaded with theological potency and had significant Christological and eschatological implications. Bede used

[1] I wish to thank the National University of Ireland for awarding me an NUI Dr Garret FitzGerald Post-doctoral Fellowship in the Humanities which has afforded me the time to write this essay. I am also grateful to Dr Peter Darby and Prof. Faith Wallis for their suggestions in response to an early draft of this paper which greatly assisted in refining my argument; and to Prof. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, Dr Jennifer O'Reilly and Dr Immo Warntjes for their comments.

[2] B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors, *BEH*, xix.

[3] See: D.P. McCarthy, 'The emergence of *anno domini*', in *Time and eternity: the medieval discourse*, eds G. Jaritz and G. Moreno-Riaño (Turnhout, 2003), 31–53; K. Harrison, *The framework of Anglo-Saxon history to AD 900* (London, 1976); D.P. Kirby, 'Bede and Northumbrian chronology', *English Historical Review*, 78 (1963), 514–27; S. Wood, 'Bede's Northumbrian dates again', *English Historical Review*, 98 (1983), 280–96.

AD selectively and deliberately in the *Historia ecclesiastica* to re-frame the past in order to actively influence his contemporaries' perception of the future.

Bede and Prospective Chronologies

When Bede came to write the *Historia ecclesiastica*, there were a variety of competing chronological systems that he could have used. Bede's continental sources contained regnal dates for the Eastern emperors, his local sources provided him with Anglo-Saxon regnal years, and both often used the fifteen-year indiction cycle.[4] Bede was familiar with the Greek tradition of dating from the first Olympiad (776 BC) and the Roman practice of dating from the foundation of Rome, *anno ab urbe condita*, in 753 BC.[5] The Romans also named the year after the two consuls who took office in January.[6] In addition Bede had received *Annus Mundi* from the Christian chronicle tradition, and *Annus Passionis* and *Annus Domini* from Easter tables. *Annus Mundi* (AM) counts time from the creation of the world and emerged among Christian writers in the third century.[7] Bede used a revised calculation of AM in his world chronicles included in *De temporibus* and *De temporum ratione*.[8]

Annus Passionis (AP) counted years from the Passion and was used by Prosper of Aquitaine (*c.* AD 390–*c.* 455) in his mid-fifth-century continuation of the *Chronicle* of Jerome (*c.* AD 341–420).[9] AP was adopted by Victorius of Aquitaine for his 532-year Easter tables completed in AD 457, and was still in

---

[4] See the papal letters, e.g. Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* (eds B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors, *BEH*), 1.24; and the synodal book from the Council of Hatfield which dates the council by referring to the regnal years of four kingdoms (Northumbria, Mercia, East Anglia and Kent) and the indiction, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.17.

[5] Bede included both in his date for the Incarnation in the *Chronica Maiora*: *De temporum ratione* (ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123B, 263–544), 66, *s.a.* 3952.

[6] For a detailed discussion of chronological systems used in the early medieval world, see A.A. Mosshammer, *The Easter computus and the origins of the Christian era* (Oxford, 2008), 11–34. See also E.J. Bickerman, *Chronology of the ancient world*, revised 2nd edition (London, 1980); and D.M. Deliyannis, 'Year dates in the early middle ages', in *Time in the medieval world*, eds C. Humphrey and W.M. Ormrod (Woodbridge, 2001), 5–22.

[7] Mosshammer, *Easter computus*, 27.

[8] *De temporibus* (ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123C, 585–611), 17–22; *De temporum ratione*, 66.

[9] Prosper of Aquitaine, *Epitoma chronicon* (ed. T. Mommsen, MGH Auct. ant. 9, 385–485), at 410–85: The section dated according to AP begins with the statement: 'Incipit adnotatio consulum a passione domini nostri Iesu Christi cum historia' (at 410). See: Mosshammer, *Easter computus*, 29.

use in Rome in the early eighth century.[10] *Annus Domini* (AD) counts the years from the Incarnation of Jesus. Dionysius Exiguus (*c*. AD 470–*c*. 544) used AD in his 95-year Easter tables that were compiled in AD 525 to begin in AD 532. Dionysius based his table on Alexandrian rules but did not follow their practice of dating from the reign of Diocletian (r. AD 284–305), preferring to count time from the Incarnation, as he did not wish to preserve Diocletian's memory.[11] The precise origins of AD are unknown and Dionysius has generally been blamed for miscalculating Jesus' birth, which is usually placed between 2 and 6 BC. However, many scholars now agree that Dionysius accepted a traditional date for the birth of Jesus which he presented as 'an unproblematic fact'.[12] Alden Mosshammer has convincingly argued that Dionysius's date for the Incarnation came from his Alexandrian sources along with their methods for calculating Easter.[13]

AD had been introduced to Anglo-Saxon England with the Dionysian tables in the seventh century and was occasionally used for legal and administrative purposes prior to Bede.[14] It has a presence throughout Bede's career, appearing at the very beginning when he twice gave the present year as AD 703 in *De temporibus*.[15] Bede also used AD twice in his *Historia abbatum*. The first time it appears is in his description of the foundation of Monkwearmouth in AD 674 which he dated by the indiction, the regnal year of Ecgfrith and AD.[16] The second occasion is at the end of the work in announcing the death of Ceolfrith in

---

[10] See Bede, *De temporum ratione*, 47, lines 73–7.

[11] Dionysius Exiguus, *Epistola ad Petronium* (ed. B. Krusch, *Studien zur christlich-mittelalterlichen Chronologie. Die Entstehung unserer heutigen Zeitrechnung*, 63–8), lines 8–14. See: C.W. Jones, *Bedae opera de temporibus* (Cambridge MA, 1943), 69.

[12] L. Holford-Strevens, *The Oxford companion to the year: an exploration of calendar customs and time reckoning* (Oxford, 1999), 778. See: *idem*, *The history of time: a very short introduction* (Oxford, 2005), 122–3; L. Cuppo, 'Felix of Squillace and the Dionysiac computus', in *The Easter controversy of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages*, eds I. Warntjes and D. Ó Cróinín (Turnhout, 2011), 110–36 at 124.

[13] Mosshammer, *Easter computus*.

[14] Harrison, *Framework of Anglo-Saxon history*, 97–8. See K. Harrison, 'The *Annus Domini* in some early charters', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 4 (1973), 551–7.

[15] *De temporibus*, 14, lines 7–8; and 22, line 2. See C.B. Kendall and F. Wallis, *Bede: On the nature of things and On times* (Liverpool, 2010), 126, n. 217 on the debate concerning the year given in Chapter 22.

[16] Bede, *Historia abbatum* (ed. C. Plummer, *VBOH*, I, 364–87), 4. Chapter 7 of the anonymous *Vita Ceolfridi* (ed. C. Plummer, *VBOH*, I, 388–404) also dates Wearmouth using AD, the indiction and the regnal years of Ecgfrith. The monastery may have preserved this dating clause. It is notable that the Jarrow foundation stone is dated by the regnal year of Ecgfrith and by Ceolfrith's abbacy; on the stone, see: J. Higgitt, 'The dedication inscription at Jarrow and its context', *The Antiquaries Journal*, 59 (1979), 343–74.

AD 716.[17] Bede discussed the years of the Lord's Incarnation in his description of the 19-year cycle in *De temporum ratione* because these are the first column in the Dionysian Easter tables.[18] He also dated from the Incarnation occasionally in that work. Bede used AD for the present year, AD 725, in the formulae provided for calculating the indiction, lunar and solar epacts, the leap year and the years of the lunar cycle and 19-year cycle.[19] When Bede described the custom of inscribing the number of years from the Passion onto paschal candles in Rome, as witnessed by members of his community, he reconciled AP 668 to AD 701.[20] In the *Chronica Maiora* Bede related that Dionysius Exiguus wrote Easter tables which would begin in AD 532; and announced the conversion of Iona to the Dionysian Easter by the Anglo-Saxon monk, Ecgberht, in AD 716.[21] These instances of *Anno Domini* dating would be interesting but not all that remarkable without Bede's extraordinary and innovative decision to use AD as the chronological system underpinning the *Historia ecclesiastica*.

AD is a prospective chronological system, which counts forward from a fixed point in time. Prospective chronologies are required for Easter tables because their principal function is to locate future Easters. In *De temporum ratione*, Bede noted that AD years continue to increase on Dionysian Easter tables.[22] Unusually, Bede applied a prospective chronological system to his account of the past in the *HE*. Eusebius's influential *Historia ecclesiastica* had based its chronological structure on imperial reigns. Although Eusebius counted time from the beginning of Christ's life at the conclusion of Book 7, this was an isolated incident. AD years occasionally appear in early medieval sources but Bede was the first to use the era of the Incarnation as a system for historical chronology.[23] It is significant therefore that Bede not only opted for prospective chronology in a narrative history, but preferred *Annus Domini* to the other available forms.

---

17 *Historia abbatum*, 23.

18 *De temporum ratione*, 47.

19 *De temporum ratione*, 49, 52, 54 and 58. On the transmission of the Dionysian *argumenta* underlying Bede's calculations, see: I. Warntjes, 'The *argumenta* of Dionysius Exiguus and their early recensions', in *Computus and its cultural context in the Latin West, AD 300–1200*, eds I. Warntjes and D. Ó Cróinín (Turnhout, 2010), 40–111.

20 *De temporum ratione*, 47, lines 73–7.

21 *De temporum ratione*, 66, *s.a.* 4518 and 4670.

22 *De temporum ratione*, 65, lines 16–17.

23 Mosshammer, *Easter computus*, 31. Mosshammer notes that Dionysius Exiguus dated historical events by reference to the consuls at Rome, rather than AD: *Easter computus*, 8–9.

Bede had earlier used prospective AM years for his chronicles of universal history following the tradition of world chronicles.[24] Bede's chronological data was based on the Vulgate rather than the Septuagint and thereby reduced the time elapsed since the creation by 1,247 years: he placed the birth of Jesus in AM 3952 rather than the traditional date of AM 5199.[25] Following the reception of *De temporibus*, Bede was accused of heresy in AD 708 for denying that the Incarnation had happened in the Sixth Age of the world because his chronology placed it in the fourth millennium of historical time. This criticism stemmed from a belief that time was divided into Six World Ages, each of which should last one thousand years and implied that the world would end in AM 6000.[26] Bede responded to his accusers with uncharacteristic outrage in the *Epistola ad Pleguinam* and vigorously defended his theology and chronology. At the beginning of the letter he asserted that the Sixth Age could not have begun except with the Incarnation.[27] In earlier discussions of the World Ages, the Incarnation had been variously placed at the beginning or end of the Sixth Age, and in the Fifth Age when the Sixth Age began with Christ's ministry.[28] Bede, however, clearly placed Christ's birth at the beginning of the Sixth Age in *De temporibus*.[29] Later in the *Chronica Maiora*, Bede declared that the Sixth Age

[24] For discussion of Bede's place in the chronicle tradition see: F. Wallis, *Bede: The reckoning of time*, revised 2nd edition (Liverpool, 2004), lxviii–lxxi and 353–62; and P.N. Darby, *Bede and the end of time* (Farnham, 2012), 28–34.

[25] *De temporibus*, 22, lines 3–4. *De temporum ratione*, 66, *s.a.* 3952. On revisions to AM chronology, see R. Landes, 'Lest the Millennium be fulfilled: apocalyptic expectations and the pattern of western chronography, 100–800 CE', in *The use and abuse of eschatology in the Middle Ages*, eds W. Verbeke, D. Verhelst and A. Welkenhuysen (Leuven, 1988), 137–211. Bede has traditionally been credited with devising the shorter AM chronology; for an alternative argument see: D. McCarthy, 'Bede's primary source for the Vulgate chronology in his chronicles in *De temporibus* and *De temporum ratione*', in *Computus and its Cultural Context in the Latin West*, eds Warntjes and Ó Cróinín, 159–89. For discussion of chronological contradictions between Bede's AM years and his Julian date for the Creation see: C.P.E. Nothaft, *Dating the Passion: the life of Jesus and the emergence of scientific chronology (200–1600)* (Leiden, 2012), 83–4.

[26] See Darby, *Bede and the end of time*, 42; and Faith Wallis's essay in the present volume.

[27] *Epistola ad Pleguinam* (ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123C, 617–26), 1, lines 14–15.

[28] Augustine began the Sixth Age both with Christ's ministry and with his birth in *De Genesi contra Manichaeos, libri duo* (ed. J.P. Migne, PL 34, cols 173–220), 23.40 (at cols 192–3). Isidore of Seville began the Sixth Age with Christ's birth, *Chronica* (ed. J.C. Martin, CCSL 112), 2, 237 (at page 115). See: Wallis, *Reckoning of Time*, 356–7; Darby, *Bede and the end of time*, 29–30.

[29] *De temporibus*, 22, lines 2–4.

of the world was consecrated by Christ's coming which he again placed at the outset of the Age.[30]

In the *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, Bede also dismissed all speculation concerning a date for the end of the world, in particular the belief that the final millennium was in progress and the number of remaining years could be calculated.[31] Bede's consistent view, as stated at the end of *De temporibus*, was that the end of the Sixth Age is known to God alone.[32] Peter Darby has suggested that Bede's comments reveal a climate of eschatological speculation in early eighth-century Northumbria.[33] Similar beliefs have been discovered in contemporary Irish sources. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín detected an AM dating clause in the exemplar for the Sirmond group of manuscripts,[34] which is given as AP 631 and 141 years from the end of the world.[35] The exemplar was compiled in southern Ireland in AD 658 and passed from there to Northumbria and Jarrow where it was used by Bede.[36] Such apocalyptic beliefs were clearly at odds with Bede's theological world-view and are relevant to his use of AD in the *HE*.

Faith Wallis has suggested that Bede may have used AD in the *Historia ecclesiastica* because virtually all events in the book take place in the Sixth Age of the world which, for Bede, always began with the Incarnation.[37] The only event

---

[30] *De temporum ratione*, 66, *s.a.* 3952: '... Iesus Christus filius Dei sextam mundi aetatem suo consecrauit aduentu'. As above, Bede also included Incarnation years in both of his works on time.

[31] *Epistola ad Pleguinam*, 15, lines 261–73. Peter Darby has demonstrated that various interpretations of world history and the world ages were prevalent in Anglo-Saxon England, some of which set an end-date for the world of AM 6000 or 7000: *Bede and the end of time*, 35–64.

[32] *De temporibus*, 22, line 80: 'Reliquum sextae aetatis Deo soli patet'. *C.f. De temporum ratione*, 67, lines 52–60.

[33] Darby, *Bede and the end of time*, 49–51.

[34] See: C.W. Jones, 'The 'lost' Sirmond manuscript of Bede's computus', *English Historical Review*, 52 (1937), 204–19; *idem*, *Bedae Opera de temporibus*, 105–10; Wallis, *Reckoning of Time*, lxxii–lxxix; D. Ó Cróinín, 'The Irish provenance of Bede's computus', *Peritia*, 2 (1983), 229–47, at 229–31; *idem*, 'Bede's Irish computus', in *Early Irish history and chronology*, ed. D. Ó Cróinín (Dublin, 2003), 201–24 at 201–3.

[35] The passage cited by Ó Cróinín is: 'Ex domini uero passione usque in pascha quod secutum est suibini filii commanni anni sunt DCXXXI. A pascha autem supradicto usque ad tempus praefinitum consummationis mundi, id est sex milibus consummatis, anno sunt CXLI', 'Irish provenance', 234. See also: I. Warntjes, 'A newly discovered prologue of AD 699 to the Easter table of Victorius of Aquitaine in an unknown Sirmond manuscript', *Peritia*, 21 (2010), 255–84, esp. 277–80.

[36] Ó Cróinín, 'Irish provenance'. See also D. Ó Cróinín, 'The date, provenance and earliest use of the works of Virgilius Maro Grammaticus', in *Tradition und Wertung: Festschrift für Franz Brunhölzl*, eds G. Bernt, F. Rädle and G. Silagi (Sigmaringen, 1989), 13–22.

[37] Wallis, *Reckoning of Time*, lxx. See also Darby, who notes that the World Ages framework steers the structure of the *Historia*, and the text is 'an account of the sixth *aetas saeculi* in Britain',

prior to the Incarnation is the Roman invasion of Britain led by Julius Caesar, which Bede dated to 693 years from the foundation of Rome and sixty before the Incarnation, and which seems to be the earliest known instance of dating 'before Christ'.[38] The other consistent characteristic of the Sixth Age in Bede's thought is its indeterminate length. Bede famously concluded his summation of the state of Britain at the end of *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.23 with the ambiguous statement: 'What the result will be, a later generation will discover'.[39] The uncertain future for the Anglo-Saxons connected to Bede's eschatological world-view.[40] In adopting a prospective chronology, undeniably linked to the Sixth Age, Bede deliberately sought to remind his readers of the unknowable nature of future time in the Sixth Age.

As a prospective chronology AD would have been preferable to AM for Bede because of AM's association with potential dates for the end of the world, AM 6000 and 7000.[41] AD offered a less potent and 'cleaner' alternative. AP, on the other hand, was connected with the controversial Victorian tables, which Bede had criticised in *De temporum ratione* while promoting the Dionysian Easter tables. AD would also have reminded Bede's readers of the Dionysian tables, which are placed in opposition to the older 84-year cycle in the *HE*, thereby enforcing the importance of Easter in the book.[42] However, AD also has far deeper theological implications which would have further influenced Bede's decision to adopt this chronological framework in the *Historia*.

Bede and the end of time, 207.

[38] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 1.2. On the importance of the Roman invasions for understanding the island of Britain's place in the classical and medieval imagination see: D. Scully, '"Proud ocean has become a servant": a classical topos in the literature of Britain's conquest and conversion', in *'Listen, O Isles, unto me'*, eds E. Mullins and D. Scully (Cork, 2011), 3–15.

[39] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.23: 'Quas res quem sit habitura finem, posterior aetas uidebit'. Hilliard's essay in the following chapter of this collection explores this ambiguous statement further.

[40] On the eschatological currents running through the *Historia ecclesiastica*, see: Darby, *Bede and the end of time*, 205–14.

[41] However, the various chronologies – AD, AP and AM – were frequently synchronised in this period and the corresponding AD year for AM 6000 was well known. See James Palmer's essay in the present volume; *idem*, 'Calculating time and the end of time in the Carolingian world, c. 740–820', *English Historical Review*, 126 (2011), 1307–31; Warntjes, 'A newly discovered prologue'.

[42] Wallis, *Reckoning of Time*, lxx–lxxi; G.H. Brown, 'Bede and change', in *'Aedifica nova'*, eds C.E. Karkov and H. Damico (Kalamazoo, MI, 2008), 33–42 at 37.

Incarnation and Passion in Patristic and Bedan Exegesis

AD as a chronological system dates from the Incarnation and therefore is inherently Christological, although this is often over-looked. Dionysius Exiguus's decision to date his Easter tables from the Incarnation has frequently been seen as a rebuke to Victorius of Aquitaine, who dated from the Passion in his tables.[43] This may have been a factor for Dionysius as his work was intended to supersede the problematic Victorian cycle. However, Dionysius stated that he dated his tables from the Incarnation so that the beginning of Christians' hope should be better known and the Passion should shine forth more clearly.[44] While this has been read as criticism of Victorian AP years, Dionysius's comments are best understood in relation to patristic theology.

The unity of Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection in Christ's life was increasingly asserted from the fifth century onwards, with particular prominence given to the Incarnation. This arose in response to major controversies surrounding the nature and person of Christ, specifically Monophysitism and Nestorianism,[45] which were rejected at the ecumenical councils. The Council of Ephesus (AD 431) used Philippians 2.7 as one of the proof texts to demonstrate that Christ was both fully God and fully man.[46] In patristic discourse Philippians 2.6–8 encapsulated the miracle of Christ's sacrifice in taking human flesh at the Incarnation and dying at the Passion:

> Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.[47]

---

[43] Holford-Strevens regarded Dionysius's decision as 'a studied insult' to Victorius: *Companion to the year*, 778.

[44] Dionysius Exiguus, *Epistola ad Petronium*, lines 12–14: 'quatinus exordium spei nostrae notius nobis existeret et causa reparationis humanae, id est, passio redemptoris nostri, evidentius eluceret'.

[45] Monophysites believed that there was one nature in Christ, a divine one in which his humanity was absorbed; Nestorius, that there were two separate and unrelated persons (human and divine) in Christ.

[46] *Decrees of the Council of Ephesus – 431* (ed. N.P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, I, 40–74); for the use of Philippians 2.7 see page 72.

[47] '[Q]ui cum in forma Dei esset non rapinam arbitratus est esse se aequalem Deo sed semet ipsum exinanivit formam servi accipiens in similitudinem hominum factus et habitu inventus ut homo humiliavit semet ipsum factus oboediens usque ad mortem mortem autem crucis' (*Biblica Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*; Douay-Rheims translation).

The passage is often cited in discussions of the Incarnation thereby recalling the Cross and highlighting the miracle of salvation.[48] Leo the Great quoted Philippians 2.7 in his letter known as the *Tome*, included in the proceedings of the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451). He argued that Christ had assumed human nature at the Incarnation, without compromising his divinity, in order to redeem humanity at the Passion.[49]

Augustine of Hippo (AD 354–430) had further enforced the link between Passion and Incarnation in his exegesis. The union of Christ and the Church had often been likened to marriage (e.g. Ephesians 2.23–32) and its beginning was traditionally placed at the opening of Christ's side on the Cross (John 19.31–4), which evoked the creation of Eve from Adam's side (Genesis 2.21–4). Augustine evolved this image and placed the beginning of this union in the Virgin's womb, which he identified as Christ's bride-chamber.[50] He wrote that Christ became head of the Church in the Virgin's womb – following the mystical joining of human and divine – and from there came as a bridegroom to his marriage with the Church.[51] Augustine demonstrated the unity in Christ's life through the Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection, all of which together compose the miracle of salvation.[52] Augustine's exegesis was subsequently very influential and evident in the writings of Leo the Great, Cassiodorus and Gregory the Great,

---

[48] See: Jerome, *Epistolae* 65 (ed. J. Labourt, *Saint Jérôme: Lettres*, vol. III, 140–67), section 9; Ambrose, *De Institutione Virginis* (ed. J.P. Migne, PL 16, cols 305–34), 1.6–7; Augustine, *Sermo* 187 (ed. J.P. Migne, PL 38, cols 1001–3), 4.4; Leo the Great, *Sermo* 69 (ed. J.P. Migne, PL 54, cols 375–80), 5. I am indebted to Dr Jennifer O'Reilly for my understanding of patristic Christology, see e.g. J. O'Reilly, "Know who and what he is': the context and inscriptions of the Durham Gospels Crucifixion image', in *Making and Meaning in Insular Art*, ed. R. Moss (Dublin, 2007), 301–16.

[49] Leo the Great, *Epistula Papae Leonis ad Flavianum ep. Constantinopolitanum de Eutyche* (ed. Tanner, *Ecumenical Councils*, I, 77–82). O'Reilly, "Know who and what he is", 305.

[50] See Augustine's exegesis of Psalm 18.6 (19.5), 'and he, as a bridegroom coming out of his bride chamber', e.g.: *Enarrationes in Psalmos* (eds E. Dekkers and J. Fraipont, CCSL 38, 39, 40); Psalm 18, *enarratio* 1.6 and 2.6; and Psalm 44.3. See further: M. Mac Carron, 'Bede, *Annus Domini* and the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum*', in *The mystery of Christ in the Fathers of the Church*, eds J.E. Rutherford and D. Woods (Dublin, 2012), 116–34 at 127–8.

[51] Augustine, *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus* (ed. D. Radbodus Willems, CCSL 36), 8.4, lines 19–25. See also: *Enarrationes in Psalmos*, Psalm 44.3; *Sermo* 192 (ed. J.P. Migne, PL 38, cols 1011–13), 2.

[52] Éamonn Ó Carragáin has shown that an ancient series of liturgical chants presented Christ's life as three royal *adventus*: Incarnation in the Virgin's womb followed by birth; death on the Cross and descent into hell; and triumphant return to heaven: *Ritual and the rood: liturgical images and the Old English poems of the Dream of the Rood tradition* (London, 2005), 321–5.

amongst others.[53] The Council of Ephesus had also highlighted the role of Mary and gave her the title of *Theotokos*, Mother of God, asserting that she was the mother of Christ who is one person but fully human and fully divine.[54] The centrality of the Incarnation in patristic thought may have influenced Dionysius Exiguus, in the early sixth century, when he opted to date his Easter tables from that event.

Bede's writings reveal his familiarity with and understanding of patristic exegesis on the importance of the Incarnation. He followed Augustine in identifying the Virgin's womb as the Lord's bride-chamber of Psalm 18.6, where Christ put on human substance and proceeded like a bridegroom for the redemption of the world.[55] Bede also followed Augustine in tracing the union between Christ and the Church back to the Virgin's womb, and linked Psalm 18.6 with Philippians 2.8 in *In primam partem Samuhelis* to make a clear association between the Incarnation and the Passion.[56] Bede brought the Incarnation and Passion together elsewhere in his works. In the very early *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*, Bede wrote that we are all saved by the Incarnation and Passion of the same Redeemer.[57] The unification of Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection in Bede's thought is also evident in his explication of the Tabernacle's lampstand (Exodus 25.34–6); in his commentary *De tabernaculo*, Bede wrote that the lampstand was aptly made of beaten gold: 'For our Redeemer who from his conception and birth existed as perfect God and perfect man, endured the pains of suffering and thus came to the glory of the resurrection'.[58]

---

[53] Leo the Great, *Sermo* 26 (ed. J.P. Migne, PL 54, cols 212–16); Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmorum* (ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL 97, 98), 18, lines 67–107 (on Psalm 18.6); Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Evangelia* (ed. R. Étaix, CCSL 141), homily 38.

[54] Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, I, 70. The earliest known icons of Mary survive from the fifth/sixth centuries in which she is usually depicted with the Christ-child, again demonstrating that he had become fully human: H. Belting, *Likeness and presence: a history of the image before the era of art*, trans. E. Jephcott (Chicago; London, 1994), 58.

[55] Bede, *Homiliarum euangelii libri II* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 122, 1–378), 1.3, lines 227–31; *In Cantica Canticorum*, 2.3 (ed. J.E. Hudson, CCSL 119B, 381–409), lines 478–80.

[56] *In Regum librum XXX quaestiones* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119, 293–322), 12, lines 18–21. *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*, 1.14, lines 33–45. *In primam partem Samuhelis* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119, 5–287), 1, lines 703–6.

[57] Bede, *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum* (ed. M.L.W. Laistner, CCSL 121, 3–99), 4, lines 27–35.

[58] Bede, *De tabernaculo* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A, 5–139), 1, lines 1214–18: 'quia et redemptor noster qui ex conceptione et natiuitate perfectus deus et homo extitit passionum dolores pertulit ac sic ad resurrectionis gloriam peruenit'. Translation: A. Holder, *Bede: On the Tabernacle* (Liverpool, 1994), 38. See also *In Cantica Canticorum*, 1.1, lines 20–21; and 6, lines 123–30.

Bede's exegesis was firmly in line with the western church on matters of Christology as informed by patristic scholarship. This is significant because in the early seventh century a further Christological controversy arose: Monothelitism, which was a development of Monophysitism and asserted that Christ had two natures but one will. It emerged in the Eastern empire in the 630s as a compromise doctrine intended to reconcile Monophysites with the rest of the Church and was finally refuted at the sixth ecumenical council held in Constantinople in AD 680–681. The heresy is directly contemporary with much of Bede's account of Anglo-Saxon conversion in the *Historia ecclesiastica*. It is only referred to in Bede's narrative in his description of the Council of Hatfield in AD 679 and very briefly in his account of Wilfrid's attendance at a synod convened by Pope Agatho at Rome in 680; both of those meetings were part of the Western Church's preparations for the Council of Constantinople.[59] I have elsewhere argued that Bede's decision to structure the *Historia ecclesiastica* on a chronological system that counts years from the Incarnation was a sophisticated doctrinal statement that was deliberately chosen to refute all the Christological heresies and would have resonated with his contemporary readers.[60] The following will demonstrate that, along with asserting the centrality of the Incarnation, Bede's careful and selective use of *Annus Domini* underlines the sacrificial significance of Easter and has an important eschatological dimension in the *Historia ecclesiastica*.

Annus Domini and the *Historia ecclesiastica*

A close study of the location of AD years in the *Historia ecclesiastica* reveals surprising results. AD is interspersed throughout the book and its appearance cannot be credited to the varying chronologies used in Bede's sources.[61] In Book 1, Bede dates the reigns of various Roman emperors using AD and builds his narrative around these years. The Gregorian mission to the English is securely placed within this framework:

[59] Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.17–18 and 5.19.

[60] Mac Carron, 'Bede, *Annus Domini* and the *Historia ecclesiastica*'.

[61] Deborah Deliyannis has argued that medieval authors generally used the form of dates that they found in their sources. While she has shown this to be true in some cases, it does not explain the existence of AD dates in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*: Deliyannis, 'Year dates in the early middle ages', 16–21.

> In the year of [the Incarnation of] our Lord 582, Maurice, the fifty-fourth from Augustus, became emperor; he ruled for twenty-one years. In the tenth year of his reign, Gregory, a man eminent in learning and in affairs, was elected pontiff of the apostolic see of Rome; he ruled for thirteen years, six months, and ten days. In the fourteenth year of this emperor and about 150 years after the coming of the Angles to Britain, Gregory, prompted by divine inspiration, sent a servant of God named Augustine and several more God-fearing monks with him to preach the word of God to the English race.[62]

Bede included the dating clauses in most of Gregory's letters to the missionaries which give Maurice's imperial year and the indiction, ensuring that the chronology of Book 1 is very clearly established. Bede concluded the first book with the Northumbrian king Æthelfrith's defeat of an Irish army at the battle of Degsastan in AD 603. Bede noted that it was the eleventh year of Æthelfrith's twenty-four year reign and the first year of Emperor Phocas.[63] This final three-part dating clause reveals the effort Bede expended in synchronising various chronological systems with AD in the *Historia*. For many of the dates in Book 1 he would not have been assisted by the Dionysian Easter tables which include AD and the indiction but not regnal dates of Roman emperors, and the dates for Æthelfrith's reign would have been drawn from other places. Bede would have examined and correlated various sources to calculate these years.[64]

In Book 2, AD appears a little more frequently: there are eleven AD dates in thirty-four chapters in Book 1, and nine in twenty chapters of Book 2. In Book 2, Bede used AD for official activities and notices, such as: the deaths of Gregory the Great, King Æthelberht and Mellitus (2.1, 2.5 and 2.7 respectively); consecrations of Mellitus and Justus, and Paulinus (2.3 and 2.9); accession of Pope Boniface V (2.7); letter from Pope Honorius to Archbishop Honorius (2.18);[65] and the baptism and death of King Edwin (2.14 and 2.20). Book 3 has

---

[62] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 1.23: 'Siquidem anno ab incarnatione Domini DLXXXII Mauricius ab Augusto quinquagesimus quartus imperium suscipiens XX et uno annis tenuit. Cuius anno regni decimo Gregorius, uir doctrina et actione praecipuus, pontificatum Romanae et apostolicae sedis sortitus rexit annos XIII menses VI et dies X. Qui diuino admonitus instinctu anno XIIII eiusdem principis, aduentus uero Anglorum in Brittaniam anno circiter CL, misit seruum Dei Augustinum et alios plures cum eo monachos timentes Dominum praedicare uerbum Die genti Anglorum'. Translation: Colgrave and Mynors, *BEH*, 69.

[63] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 1.34.

[64] See Mac Carron, 'Bede, *Annus Domini* and the *Historia ecclesiastica*', 117–18.

[65] This is the only papal letter to which Bede adds AD to the letter's dating clause, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 2.14: '... id est, anno dominicae incarnationis DCXXXIIII' (AD 634). This is possibly because the other papal letters can be dated by their internal dating clauses in relation to material

very few AD dates in comparison to the other books: eight in thirty chapters. Bede used AD twice to book-end his account of the monastery of Iona (3.4), and recorded AD dates for the deaths of Eadbald of Kent, Paulinus, Archbishop Honorius and Ecgberht of Iona (3.8, 3.14, 3.20 and 3.27), the Synod of Whitby (3.26) and the eclipse of AD 664 (3.27). The narrative of Book 3 is less dependent on AD for its chronological framework, which will be discussed further below.

Book 4 also used the AD formulation eight times in thirty chapters. Bede gave AD dates for the consecration of Theodore as Archbishop of Canterbury (4.1); the deaths of Oswiu, Hild and Hlothhere of Kent (4.5, 4.23 and 4.26); the Synod of Hertford (4.5); the devastation of Kent by a Mercian army led by Æthelred and of Ireland by Ecgfrith's Northumbrian army (4.12 and 4.26); and the appearance of a comet (4.12). This book also gives us other AD years by clearly stating that an event took place in the same year as another event dated AD: for example, the first expulsion of Wilfrid from his see in AD 678 (4.12), and Ecgfrith's death and Cuthbert's consecration as bishop in AD 685 (4.26 and 4.27). Book 4's narrative is structured around these AD dates.

Book 5 has eleven AD dates in the first twenty-three chapters in addition to the chronological synopsis based on AD in 5.24. Bede recorded AD dates for the deaths of John of Beverley, Archbishop Theodore, Aldfrith of Northumbria, Ecgberht on Iona and Wihtred of Kent (5.6, 5.8, 5.18, 5.22 and 5.23); the baptism and death of Cædwalla of the West Saxons (5.7); the election and death of Archbishop Berhtwold of Canterbury (5.8 and 5.23); the consecration of Willibrord as archbishop of the Frisians (5.11); the death of Osred and succession of Cenred of Northumbria, and the conversion of Iona to the canonical Easter and Petrine tonsure (5.22); the appearance of two comets and a summation of the state of Britain at the time of writing (5.23). 5.24 contains Bede's recapitulation of the events outlined in the narrative, all with AD dates, followed by his short autobiographical note and the conclusion of the work. AD provides the chronological underpinning to Book 5 and Bede's short chronicle at the end of the book makes it explicitly clear that AD is the chronological system upon which the whole work is based.

The chronology of Book 3 evidently deserves closer scrutiny. The striking aspect when one examines where Bede used AD in the narrative is that he does not provide a single AD date for Northumbrian history from the death of King Edwin in AD 633 to the Synod of Whitby in AD 664. The only identified AD years in this period are the deaths of King Eadbald of Kent in 640, Paulinus

presented around them or within the context of the narrative: this letter was written after the death of Edwin but is included before his death in the book.

(then of Rochester) in 644 and Archbishop Honorius in 653, all associated with Kent. It could be argued that this reflects the nature of Bede's sources which did not provide him with clear chronological data for Northumbria at that time. This would be mistaken, however, as Bede provided four Northumbrian AD dates for this period in the synopsis of the *Historia ecclesiastica* in 5.24. Bede recorded the death of King Oswald in AD 642; the murder of King Oswine and the death of Bishop Aidan in 651; and the defeat of the Mercian king Penda (at the Battle of the Winwæd) in 655. He also recorded the conversion of Peada and the Middle Angles to Christianity in AD 653, which Book 3 informed the reader was brought about by the marriage of Peada to Oswiu's daughter, Alhflæd, as a condition of their marriage.[66]

The lack of AD data for Oswald's reign is particularly surprising as Bede twice explained that all those who compute regnal years had decided to abolish the memory of his predecessors in Deira and Bernicia and assigned the year to Oswald.[67] On the second occasion, at the end of his account of Oswald's reign, Bede noted that Oswald ruled for nine years including his predecessors' reigns. This indicates that Bede was aware of the length of Oswald's reign, a view enforced by his AD date for Oswald's death in Book 5.24.[68] Apart from the minor figure of Oswine, Oswald is the only significant English king in the *Historia ecclesiastica* whose reign is not dated from the Incarnation. King Oswiu is a different case. Bede dates Oswiu's death to AD 670 but omits AD dates for the Battle of the Winwæd and the conversion of Peada in the narrative as we have seen.[69] The AD year for the beginning of Oswiu's reign can also be inferred as Bede wrote that in his second year, and AD 644, Paulinus died.[70] This further proves that Bede could have provided dates from the Incarnation in his narrative had he so wished. The life of Bishop Aidan, another central figure in Book 3, similarly, is not dated from the Incarnation although Bede dated his death to AD 651 in Book 5.24. Bede frequently praised Aidan's merits and virtues and included three of his miracles to assert his sanctity.[71]

The clear common factor linking Oswald, Oswine, Oswiu and Aidan, particularly in the context of Bede's narrative, is their celebration of the Ionan (84-year) Easter. In addition, the period between the death of Edwin and the Synod of Whitby – when Bede's narrative omits AD dates for Northumbrian

66 *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24 and 3.21.
67 *Historia ecclesiastica*, 3.1 and 3.9.
68 *Historia ecclesiastica*, 3.9 and 5.24.
69 *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.5, 3.24, 3.21.
70 *Historia ecclesiastica*, 3.14.
71 *Historia ecclesiastica*, 3.15–17.

history – is more or less coterminous with the period in which the Northumbrian Church was led by Ionan missionaries. The only AD year given for Oswiu in the narrative is the date of his death, six years after Whitby. The implications of Bede's chronological choice are profound. While one could argue on a superficial level that Bede does not use AD dates for those who do not follow the Dionysian Easter because the Dionysian Easter is associated with AD, this is to overlook his short account of Iona in Book 3.4 which is book-ended by AD years. Bede recorded that the monastery was founded in AD 565 and, after describing its unusual episcopal arrangements, noted that they used tables of doubtful accuracy when calculating Easter up to AD 715, a period of 150 years.[72]

It appears that in the *Historia ecclesiastica* Bede never used AD in the narrative for people who knowingly celebrated what he considered to be the 'wrong' Easter.[73] Bede could explain Columba of Iona's error through lack of knowledge but knew that by the 630s the Ionan community were aware of the Easter controversy and persisted with their existing tables. His defence of the Ionan community's traditional practice centred on the premise that they were so far away at the ends of the earth nobody had brought them accurate information about the observance of Easter.[74] However, in the previous chapter, Bede noted that the people in the southern parts of Ireland had for a long time followed the canonical Easter.[75] In Book 2 Bede referred to three letters sent to the Irish on the subject of Easter, one each from Archbishop Laurence (along with Mellitus and Justus), Pope Honorius and Pope-elect John (and other members of the Roman curia).[76] As the seventh century progressed, the excuse of ignorance was increasingly difficult to uphold. In concluding his account of Aidan, Bede qualified his earlier defence of the Ionan practice by stating that Aidan was either

---

[72] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 3.4.

[73] It should be noted that Bede's account of the Easter controversy in the *Historia ecclesiastica* reduces the debate to a dispute between 'Irish' and 'Roman' practice. For a discussion of the potentially wide variation in Easter calculations in the period see: L. Holford-Strevens, 'Marital discord in Northumbria: Lent and Easter, his and hers', in *Computus and its Cultural Context in the Latin West*, eds Warntjes and Ó Cróinín, 143–58. I am very grateful to Prof. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín for discussion of the Easter controversy in the Insular Church.

[74] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 3.4.

[75] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 3.3.

[76] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 2.4 and 2.19. Laurence's letter was sent before AD 624, as he was succeeded as Archbishop by Mellitus who died in 624, *Historia ecclesiastica* 2.7 (*BEH*, 158). Pope Honorius ruled from 625–638 and John IV from late 640–642. John's letter was sent while he was still pope-elect and is dated to late AD 640. On this letter see: K. Harrison, 'A letter from Rome to the Irish clergy, AD 640', *Peritia*, 3 (1984), 222–9; D. Ó Cróinín, "New heresy for old': Pelagianism in Ireland and the Papal Letter of 640', *Speculum*, 60 (1985), 505–16.

ignorant of the canonical time for Easter or was compelled by public opinion not to follow it.[77]

The Northumbrian kings may not have been aware of the technicalities of Easter calculation but Oswiu's wife, Eanflæd, followed the Roman practice that she had learned in Kent and did not keep Easter with her husband. Bede highlighted the disunion in the royal household in outlining the background to the Synod of Whitby. He also noted that the difference in practice was tolerated by all while Aidan was alive, and again defended Aidan who he says had to follow the practice of those who sent him.[78] There is no certain proof that Kings Oswald and Oswine knew of competing Easter practices. However, according to Bede, James the Deacon continued to observe the Roman Easter in Northumbria ensuring continuity between the mission of Paulinus and the Synod of Whitby.[79] Also, as Bede attests, the difference in practice at the Bernician court had arisen during Aidan's episcopate and could have been known to Oswine.

In contrast to Aidan who does not receive AD dates in the narrative of the *Historia*, on almost every occasion that Bede mentioned Ecgberht (of Iona) he provided an AD year. He does so in Book 3.4, 3.27, 4.26, 5.22 and 5.23.[80] Ecgberht is also named twice in the recapitulation of events in Book 5.24: AD 716 for his conversion of the Ionan monks to the canonical Easter and his death in AD 729. Ecgberht also appeared in the *Chronica Maiora* for his conversion of the Ionan community to the Dionysian Easter, which Bede also dated from the Incarnation, as mentioned above. The link between Easter and AD years is further enforced in *De temporum ratione*. Apart from the *annus praesens* in technical calculations, Bede used AD three times in *De temporum ratione*, each

[77] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 3.17. In Bede's account of the Synod of Whitby, Wilfrid states that those who have heard the decrees of the apostolic see, that is the universal Church, and refuse to follow them are committing sin, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 3.25.

[78] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 3.25.

[79] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 3.25. Bede does not address the Victorian Easter in the *Historia ecclesiastica* which was most likely the practice followed in Kent at the time of Paulinus and potentially after, and was the practice followed by the southern Irish from the first-half of the seventh century: see Holford-Strevens, 'Marital discord in Northumbria'. Nor does Bede refer to Dionysius Exiguus in the book (he is named in Ceolfrith's letter to Nechtan, king of the Picts) *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.21; rather Bede always describes the alternatives to the Ionan Easter as the 'Roman' practice, which could be claimed for both the Victorian and Dionysian cycles at different times. I plan to address this thorny issue in a subsequent publication. For present purposes, the Anglo-Saxons who follow the 'Roman' Easter prior to the Synod of Whitby perhaps have the defence of ignorance of the Dionysian tables.

[80] Note, however, that Bede does not insert AD dates for Ecgberht when describing his vision of Chad's soul ascending to heaven (*Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.3), and his desire to evangelise among the Germans or travel to Rome (*Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.9).

of which has a paschal context: the AD year for the paschal candles in Rome; the formulation of the Dionysian Easter tables; and Ecgberht's work on Iona.[81] As we have seen, Bede frequently linked the Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection in his exegesis and was firmly in accord with patristic thought on the unity of purpose in Christ's life. Every AD date, therefore, does not recall the Incarnation and Nativity alone, but the whole of Christ's life and his redemptive sacrifice which is celebrated every week in the liturgy and in a special way at Easter.

For Bede, the controversy about the date of Easter goes to the very heart of Christian unity, which is threatened by divergent Easter practices.[82] In *De temporum ratione*, Bede wrote that the Easter season proclaims the universality of the Church which is redeemed by the paschal mystery throughout the world.[83] The Irish (and British) who opt to follow their own Easter practices are frequently presented as being in opposition to the rest of the world. In Bede's paraphrasing of Pope Honorius's letter to the Irish on Easter, he wrote that the pope:

> ... urging them with much shrewdness not to consider themselves, few as they were and placed on the extreme boundaries of the world, wiser than the ancient and modern Churches of Christ scattered throughout the earth; nor should they celebrate a different Easter contrary to the paschal tables and the decrees of the bishops of all the world met in synod.[84]

Similarly in Bede's account of the Synod of Whitby, Wilfrid claimed that the Easter he proposed was celebrated in Rome, Italy, Gaul, Africa, Asia, Egypt, Greece and wherever the Church was established in the world: 'The only exceptions are these men and their accomplices in obstinacy, I mean the Picts and the Britons, who in these, the two remotest islands of the Ocean, and only in some parts of them, foolishly attempt to fight against the whole world'.[85]

---

[81] *De temporum ratione*, 47, lines 73–7; and 66, *s.a.* 4518 and 4670.

[82] See: J. O'Reilly, 'Introduction', in *Bede: On the Temple*, trans. S. Connolly (Liverpool, 1995), xvii–lv, at xxxv–xxxix.

[83] *De temporum ratione*, 64, lines 74–8.

[84] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 2.19: 'sollerter exhortans ne paucitatem suam in extremis terrae finibus constitutam sapientiorem antiquis siue modernis, quae per orbem errant, Christi ecclesiis aestimarent, neue contra paschales conputos et decreta synodalium totius orbis pontificum aliud pascha celebrarent'. Translation: Colgrave and Mynors, *BEH*, 199.

[85] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 3.25: 'uno ac non diuerso temporis ordine geri conperimus, praetor hos tantum et obstinationis eorum conplices, Pictos dico et Brettones, cum quibus de duabus ultimis Oceani insulis, et his non totis, contra totum orbem stulto labore pugnant'. Translation: Colgrave and Mynors, *BEH*, 301. *Cf.* Stephen of Ripon, *Vita Wilfridi* (ed. B. Colgrave, *Life of*

The disunity caused by divergent Easter practices is manifested in preventing people from breaking bread together in celebration of the Church's greatest festival. Archbishop Laurence, in his letter to the Irish on Easter, referred to a Bishop Dagan who not only refused to take food with the Roman missionaries, but refused to eat in the same house where they took their meals.[86] In describing the concern about the proper practice of Easter in Northumbria prior to Whitby, Bede noted that in some years King Oswiu celebrated Easter Sunday while his wife, Eanflæd continued to observe the Lenten fast with her retinue.[87] The division in the royal household reflected the division in the kingdom and the Church. This unnecessary disunity in the Church is especially to be avoided as it will not be reflected at the heavenly banquet, which is symbolised by Easter.[88] Bede's description of Ecgberht's death on Iona is significant here. In AD 729 Easter fell on 24 April, a date that would have been outside Iona's old limits. Ecgberht died on that day after he had celebrated mass in memory of the resurrection. Bede wrote:

> So he began the joyful celebration of the greatest of all festivals with the brothers whom he had converted to the grace of unity, and completed it, or rather continues the endless celebration of it, with the Lord and His apostles and the other citizens of heaven.[89]

The Easter controversy has an eschatological dimension in the *Historia ecclesiastica* as the observance of the true Easter reflects the heavenly celebration, as explicitly stated in Bede's account of Ecgberht's death. In the Northumbrian church, from the death of Edwin in AD 633 until the Synod of Whitby in AD 664, the Easter observance in Bede's view was unorthodox and led to disunity in the Church, a disunity which imperilled the sacrificial significance of Easter.

Bishop Wilfrid), 10. *Cf.* also: Cummian, *De controversia paschali* (eds M. Walsh and D. Ó Cróinín, *Cummian's Letter*, 55–97), lines 107–10 and 177–80.

[86] Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 2.4.

[87] Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica*, 3.25. *Cf.* also: Aldhelm's letter to Geraint (ed. R. Ehwald, MGH Auct. ant. 15, 480–86).

[88] See *De temporibus*, 15, lines 4–6, in which Bede explained that Easter celebrates the mysteries of the life to come; and *cf. De temporum ratione*, 64, lines 14–20.

[89] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.22: 'ac gaudium summae festiuitatis, quod cum fratribus quos ad unitatis gratiam conuerterat inchoauit, cum Domino et apostolis ceterisque caeli ciuibus conpleuit, immo id ipsum celebrare sine fine non desinit'. Translation: Colgrave and Mynors, *BEH*, 555.

Conclusion

Bede's use of a chronological system which counts the years from the Incarnation, and which therefore had overt Christological overtones, in the *Historia ecclesiastica* was a remarkable innovation. His underlying intentions are apparent in his works of exegesis and computus which illuminate the *Historia*. The legacy of Bede's novel appropriation of AD can still be seen today in our continued use of AD/CE. However, Bede's intentions far exceeded an attempt to implement a straightforward chronological system. His *anno ab incarnatione Domini* dates work on a number of levels simultaneously and condense several inter-related theological concepts. At its most superficial, it reminds the reader of the Dionysian Easter tables. If we probe deeper, an eschatological intention is evident as applying a chronological system that will continue increasing in perpetuity reinforced for Bede's readers that the end of the Sixth Age is unknown. Finally, Bede's AD years distil a sophisticated orthodox Christology. With every AD date Bede asserted the true meaning of the Incarnation and elucidated the miracle of salvation which will be fulfilled in the heavenly celebration at the end of time.

This page has been left blank intentionally

Chapter 8

Quae res Quem sit Habitura Finem, Posterior Aetas Videbit: Prosperity, Adversity and Bede's Hope for the Future of Northumbria[1]

Paul C. Hilliard

In 5.23 of his *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* Bede provided a survey of the political and ecclesiastical landscape of Britain in *c*. 731, with an extra emphasis on the kingdom of Northumbria. This chapter is data rich, as it bounces from one observation to the next. With these fast paced observations the chapter reads more like a chronicle entry than the typical narrative found in the *Historia ecclesiastica*. After being inundated by facts, as the work draws to a close the likely questions in a reader's mind are: so, what is next? What does the future hold? Bede provided something of an answer in the concluding words of the narrative of the *Historia ecclesiastica*:

> In these favourable times of peace and prosperity, many of the Northumbrian race, both noble and simple, have laid aside their weapons and taken the tonsure, preferring that they and their children should take monastic vows rather than train themselves in the art of war. What the result will be, a later generation will discover. This is the state of the whole of Britain at the present time ... Let the earth rejoice in His perpetual kingdom and let Britain rejoice in His faith and let the multitude of isles be glad and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness.[2]

[1] I would like to thank the editors of the volume for their diligence and comments. Their contributions have greatly improved this essay. Also I would like to thank my wife Robin, whose support is never failing. Of course all errors remain my own.

[2] *Historia ecclesiastica* (eds B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors, *BEH*), 5.23: 'Qua adridente pace ac serenitate temporum, plures in gente Nordanhumbrorum, tam nobiles quam priuati, se suosque liberos despositis armis satagunt magis, accepta tonsura, monasterialibus adscribere uotis quam bellicis exercere studiis. Quae res quem sit habitura finem, posterior aetas videbit.

The last lines of the chapter summarise the response Bede desired of the reader witnessing the unfolding of the salvation history of Britain and to a greater extent the English: praise of the Lord. Yet what about the future? Bede noted that the times were peaceful and serene (*pace ac serentitate*) and that people were flocking to monastic vows. Were these things, peace and an increase in monks, not worthy of celebration by Bede? Rather than praise the situation of peace and monastic enthusiasm, Bede struck a surprisingly ambivalent tone; he refused to predict what the outcome of such behaviours might be. While it is certainly correct to connect this passage with the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* and the issue of false monasteries, I, along with R.A. Markus, think that there is much more to these ambivalent words, which do so much to undercut the rose coloured ending of the *Historia ecclesiastica*.[3] Markus's inclination was to see the ambiguity arising from Bede's cosmological perspective of the inability of man to know the remainder of the sixth and final age of the world.[4] While Markus is certainly correct to locate Bede's ambivalence in his view of the working out of salvation history, there is an additional reason for Bede to sound a note of uncertainty. By declaring the Northumbrians to be in a state of peace and prosperity, as Colgrave and Mynors render it, large warning bells should be sounding in the reader's mind. Indeed Darby has shown how ominous 5.23 can be when placed within an eschatological context.[5]

What could be so dangerous about peace, tranquillity and prosperity? After all, according to Higham the message of the *Historia ecclesiastica* is very clear: 'He [Bede] was attempting to set out history to the Northumbrian elite in the form of parables which read in simplified terms: 'x in the past did this, which pleased/displeased God, who in response rewarded/punished x".[6] In this perspective there should be nothing to worry about in times of plenty, for the people are right with God. This Eusebian reading of Bede, where the followers of true religion prosper in this world, has a few major counter-examples within the

---

Hic est inpraesentiarum uniuersae status Brittaniae ... .In cuius regno perpetuo exultet terra, et congratulante in fide eius Brittania, laetentur insulae multae et confiteantur memoriae sanctitatis eius'. Translation: *BEH*, 561.

3 R.A. Markus, *Bede and the tradition of ecclesiastical historiography* (Jarrow Lecture, 1975) 15. See also C. Plummer, *VBOH*, II, 343 and Colgrave and Mynors, *BEH*, 560, n. 1.

4 Markus, *Bede and the tradition*, 15. For an introduction to Bede's understanding of the Ages of the World see F. Wallis, *Bede: The reckoning of time*, revised 2nd edition (Liverpool, 2004), 353–66.

5 P.N. Darby, *Bede and the end of time* (Farnham, 2012), 210–14.

6 N.J. Higham, *(Re-)reading Bede: the Ecclesiastical History in context* (London, 2006), 208.

Historia ecclesiastica itself.[7] The British in the *Historia ecclesiastica* do accord with Higham's model. Bede, borrowing his moral from Gildas, recounted that so long as the British remembered the calamities that had befallen them, especially the Saxon scourge, the people remained orderly, but once the British had forgotten and a generation arose which knew only *serenitas*, then the British abandoned the path of righteousness. Worse yet, Bede added, they failed to evangelise the Anglo-Saxons. The British would receive punishment for their failures in 2.2, when Æthelfrith defeated the British army and slaughtered the British clergy at Chester.[8] While heterodoxy explained the punishment of the British, certainly Bede had no objections to the orthodoxy of Edwin and Oswald, both kings of Northumbria defeated and killed by the pagan Penda, king of Mercia. Nor did the holiness of King Oswine (k. of Deira 642–651) save him from his kinsman Oswiu (k. of Bernicia 642–651, k. of Northumbria 651–675).[9] If peace and tranquillity, that is temporal blessings, resulted in the temporal destruction of the British and the orthodoxy of kings was no avail against their enemies, then it seems that historical causation may be more complicated than at first glance. Indeed *serenitas* is also presented in a positive light in *Historia ecclesiastica* 1.6, for the return of *temporum Christianorum serenitate* enabled the construction of a church of wonderful workmanship as a memorial of St Alban.[10] Thus it appears that we have conflicting perspectives on what the future might hold for the Northumbrians: peace and prosperity could be signs of good things to come or they could be the beginning of the destruction of the people. Thankfully

---

[7] For a presentation of the Eusebian vision of history see G.F. Chesnut, *The first Christian histories: Eusebius*, *Socrates*, *Sozomen*, *Theodoret*, *and Evagrius* (Macon, GA, 1986), esp. chapters 3 and 4 and also G.F. Chesnut, 'Eusebius, Augustine, Orosius, and the later patristic and medieval Christian historians', in *Eusebius*, *Christianity*, *and Judaism*, eds H.W. Attridge and G. Hata (Detroit, MI, 1992), 687–713, at 696–7.

[8] Darby has identified the important use of *serenitas*: *Bede and the end of time*, 213–14. The literature on Bede's view of the British is quickly becoming vast. Of the more recent additions to the subject see W. Foley and N. Higham, 'Bede on the Britons', *Early Medieval Europe*, 17 (2009); A. Murray, 'Bede and the unchosen race', in *Power and identity in the Middle Ages*, eds H. Pryce and J. Watts (Oxford, 2007), 52–67; A.T. Thacker, 'Bede, the Britons and the Book of Samuel', in *Early Medieval studies in memory of Patrick Wormald*, eds S.D. Baxter, C.E. Karkov, J.L. Nelson and D.A.E. Pelteret (Farnham, 2009), 129–47; C. Stancliffe, *Bede and the Britons*, 2005 Whithorn Lecture (Stranraer, 2007); and N.P. Brooks, *Bede and the English* (Jarrow Lecture, 1999) and 'From British to English Christianity: deconstructing Bede's interpretation of the conversion', in *Conversion and colonization in Anglo-Saxon England*, eds C. Karkov and N. Howe (Tempe, AZ, 2006), 1–30.

[9] For the relationship between Oswiu and Oswine see N. Higham, *The convert kings: power and religious affiliation in early Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester, 1997), 229–31.

[10] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 1.7.

with regard to this difficult question about the implications of prosperity and adversity for the future of the Northumbrians, and indeed all Christians, we do not need to confine ourselves to the *Historia ecclesiastica*. Bede left a rich resource for grasping his Christian worldview in his biblical commentaries. In the following sections I will shed some light on Bede's theological vision in his commentaries and then demonstrate how he brought that theological vision to life in the *Historia ecclesiastica*.

The Dangers of Prosperity

For Bede, the world in general was a great danger to the Christian. Throughout his commentaries are warnings about the allurement of the world, whether material goods or even secular learning and eloquence. For the sake of brevity, let me highlight some of Bede's more forceful statements on this subject. In his Genesis commentary Bede unpacked the image of the crow and the dove in the story of Noah and the Ark to mean that there would always be those who would abandon the Church for the sake of the world, represented by the crow, while the true members of the Church, the doves, would know that there was no comfort to be found in the world.[11] For Bede, to be worldly, that is, motivated by desire for the things of the world, placed one squarely in the devil's camp; one ended up joining the heretics in their attack on the Church.[12] Even secular learning, especially stories, could easily drag one down into worldliness.[13] This constant rejection of the world and the tendency to highlight the dangers of dealing with the world are especially prevalent in the unique passages of his commentary on the Gospel of Mark.[14]

Unsurprisingly, the temptations of Christ in the desert provided Bede with ample opportunity to reflect on the dangers of prosperity. Christ's temptations revealed to Bede that persecution would always be with the Church, but also

[11] *Libri quattuor in principium Genesis* (ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 118A), 2, lines 1763–867; see also J.S. Barrow, 'How Coifi pierced Christ's side: a re-examination of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, II, Chapter 13', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 62 (2011), 693–706, at 700.

[12] *In primam partem Samuhelis* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119, 5–287), 1, lines 1600–605.

[13] *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 2, lines 1851–9.

[14] Plummer, *VBOH*, I, cxlviii. Bede wrote his commentary on the Gospel of Mark sometime after he wrote *De tabernaculo*, and therefore the work was composed around ten to twenty years after he wrote *In Lucae evangelium expositio*. In composing the Marcan commentary Bede reused a great deal of material from his commentary on Luke. These reused passages are commented on in W.T. Foley, 'Bede's exegesis of passages unique to the Gospel of Mark', in *Biblical studies in the Early Middle Ages*, eds C. Leonardi and G. Orlandi (Florence, 2005), 105–24.

that Jesus was teaching his Church always to give up worldly things for the divine.[15] Thus we see a fairly consistent motif in Bede, that worldliness is one of the Devil's greatest tools in the constant spiritual warfare in this life. Bede's allegorical unpacking of the narrative of the two thieves crucified with Jesus is even more explicit in condemnation of worldliness. In his commentaries on both Luke and Mark, Bede stated that the thieves represented two types of Christians. In the Lucan commentary the good thief represented the martyrs, the chaste, or those focused on heaven, while the bad thief represented those who loved human praise and did not renounce the world.[16] In a subsequent passage Bede highlighted the marvellous nature of the belief of the good thief.[17] When Bede returned to unpacking the meaning of the two thieves in his commentary on the Gospel of Mark a subtle change occurred. Bede repeated the types of Christians represented by the thieves in nearly the same words as in his Luke commentary.[18] In the Gospel of Mark it was recorded that Jesus was crucified between two *latrones* and that those who were crucified with him abused him.[19] Missing in the Marcan Gospel account is the exchange between the two thieves recorded in Luke. Nevertheless Bede chose to take up once again the exchange between the two thieves in his Mark commentary. The comparison between the two thieves was thus a Lucan pericope that Bede deliberately reintroduced into his commentary on Mark. In the Mark commentary Bede used the two thieves to present a dichotomy between those focused on heaven and false Christians, who mainly desired temporal blessings from the Lord in this life. For Bede it was fitting that the thief desiring freedom from temporal affliction received no answer from the Lord, while the one who asked for heavenly things received assurance from Christ. Bede punctuated this dichotomy by saying that he saw daily this type of false Christian in the Church.[20] There is little doubt left, then, that for Bede the worldly mindset was a great danger and the true attitude of the Christian should be one focused on the singular reward of eternal life. The following sufficiently summarises Bede's opinion about the value of living a Christian life in relation with the world: 'namely that the good works that we do with a view to temporal welfare or favour or pleasure should either be reckoned

[15] *In Marci evangelium expositio* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 120, 431–648), 1, lines 290–320.
[16] *In Lucae evangelium expositio* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 120, 5–425), 6, lines 1569–82.
[17] *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, 6, lines 1681–99.
[18] *In Marci evangelium expositio*, 4, lines 1443–57.
[19] Mark 15.27–32.
[20] *In Marci evangelium expositio*, 4, lines 1468–504.

among bad works or be separated from base aspiration and done for the sake of heavenly reward alone'.[21]

A careful reader of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* might remember that there is one passage which seems to contradict Bede's discussion of the two thieves. This passage is found in *Historia ecclesiastica* 2.13 and the context is the very protracted and long delayed conversion of Edwin and his court.[22] Coifi, whom Bede names as the *primus pontificus* or high-priest, stood up in council and gave his understanding of the purpose of religion, which was to receive benefits and honour from the king and success in exchange for worship of the gods.[23] If the new religion is better and stronger, *meliora et fortioria*, he argued, then it should be adopted. Plummer long ago identified the inherent materialism in this reasoning and was disappointed in Bede for calling this argument in the following sentence *verbis prudentibus.*[24] Barrow also agrees that Coifi's statement would fail Bede's high theological standard, but she is willing to see some worldly prudence and bravery in Coifi challenging his king.[25] Did Bede then declare a connection between religion and material benefits to be a wise position, as it is translated in Colgrave and Mynors? We are faced with a piece of evidence that seems contrary to Bede's statements in his Gospel commentaries highlighted above. What we must ask is: what is it in Coifi's argument that Bede found to be prudent? According to Carroll, Bede's understanding of prudence seems to be closely related to morality and the eternal life, especially the ability to discern good and evil.[26] Could the prudence that Bede highlighted be Coifi's ability to discern between a good and evil religion, or must the prudence be aligned with the materialism? The rest of the passage seems to provide the answer. After the priest had spoken an unnamed noble rose and gave that most famous speech about the flight of the sparrow. The point of this story was that

---

[21] *In Ezram et Neemiam* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A, 237–392), 2, lines 2009–13: 'Cuius profecto rei in promptu esse mysterium constat quia bona opera quae intuitu temporalis commodi uel fauoris uel delectationis agimus aut inter mala sunt opera reputanda aut ab infirma intentione secernenda et pro caelesti solum retributione sunt facienda'. Translation: S. DeGregorio, *Bede: On Ezra and Nehemiah* (Liverpool, 2006), 152–3.

[22] J. Barrow has provided an excellent survey of the range of scholarship on this passage, particularly with regard to paganism and conversion: 'How Coifi pierced Christ's side', 693–5.

[23] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 2.13.

[24] Plummer, *VBOH*, II, 99.

[25] Barrow, 'How Coifi pierced Christ's side', 699.

[26] M.T.A. Carroll, *The Venerable Bede: his spiritual teachings* (Washington D.C., 1946), 232–3.

they should adopt whatever religion revealed more about otherworldly things.[27] Plummer celebrated this passage for its spiritualism.[28] After this passage Bede stated that other councillors continued in a similar way under divine inspiration. The prudence of Coifi, however, came after he was catechised by Paulinus, for after Coifi was converted and instructed he stated the following: 'For a long time now I have realised that our religion is worthless; for the more diligently I sought the truth in our cult, the less I found it. Now I confess openly that the truth shines out clearly in this teaching which can bestow on us the gift of life, salvation, and eternal happiness'.[29] The catechised Coifi was even more revealing because all of the priest's materialism, lamented by Plummer, is gone and he speaks only of truth and salvation. It is striking that the uncatechised Coifi sounds very similar to the bad thief in Bede's Mark Commentary, but after he received Paulinus's preaching he accorded with the good thief. This whole chapter seems dedicated to the spiritual understanding of the rewards of religion and it would be difficult in the overall context of the passage and in the overall trend of Bede's thought to read the words *verbis prudentibus* as blanket approval of a materialist interpretation of the Christian life.

The proper understanding of the Christian message, however, does demand action for Bede. The converted Coifi mounted the king's stallion and proceeded to profane his old pagan shrine by casting a spear into it. Barrow has rightly shown the literary parallels that are attendant on the awareness of Bede's understanding of the side of the temple as the side of Christ and the word *lancea* as the word used to describe the spear which pierced Christ's side on the cross.[30] Yet, while these parallels identified by Barrow are surely there, we have not exhausted the range of spiritual interpretation to which this passage is open. This should be no surprise, since Bede's main literary job was explicating how a single text and narrative could be understood in multiple, beneficial ways. The parallel that seems most relevant to the passage comes from Bede's *In primam partem*

---

[27] See Barrow, 'How Coifi pierced Christ's side', 699–701 for the possible influence of the Christian afterlife on the sparrow speech.

[28] Plummer, *VBOH*, II, 99.

[29] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 2.13: 'Iam olim intellexeram nihil esse, quod colebamus, quia uidelicet quanto studiosius in eo cultu ueritatem quaerebam, tanto minus inueniebam. Nunc autem aperte profiteor, quia in hac praedicatione ueritas claret illa, quae nobis uitae salutis et beatitudinis aeternae dona ualet tribuere'. Translation: Colgrave and Mynors, *BEH*, 185.

[30] Barrow, 'How Coifi pierced Christ's side', 703–5; for the discussion over how to read the *Historia ecclesiastica* with regard to biblical exegesis, see: A. Holder, 'Allegory and history in Bede's interpretation of sacred architecture', *American Benedictine Review*, 40 (1989), 115–31 and S. Rowley, 'Reassessing exegetical interpretations of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*', *Literature and Theology*, 17 (2003), 227–43.

Samuhelis. Paulinus's preaching of the gospel facilitated an action, an opening salvo in the spiritual battle for the soul of Northumbria, which was achieved by Coifi taking up the lance and horse and desecrating the pagan shrine. Now there are three uses of *lancea* in 1 Samuel, each at very crucial moments in the biblical narrative. Two regard the relationship between Saul and David: the first at 1 Samuel 19.10 where Saul, enraged, attempts to kill David with his spear; the second at 1 Samuel 26.8 concerns the moment when David was begged by his loyal captain Abishai to let his retainer run the sleeping Saul through with his *lancea*. The third parallel, however, seems more appropriate in the context of this passage in the *Historia ecclesiastica*. 1 Samuel 13.19–14.48 recounts the rebellion of Saul and the people of Israel against the Philistines. Now in the biblical passage it is recorded that the people of Israel had neither a sword nor spear in their hands (*ensis et lancea in manu*), save Saul and his son Jonathan. The phrase *lancea in manu* is a striking parallel to *Historia ecclesiastica* 2.13: *Accinctus ergo gladio accepit lanceam in manu*.[31] The parallel seems even more compelling if we turn to Bede's comments on this part of 1 Samuel. In many of his comments on 1 Samuel 13, Bede cast the Philistines in the role of evil spirits constantly seeking to destroy the people of God, whether by attacking the people's humility or by leading them astray with worldly stories.[32] In Bede's allegorising hands the arms of Saul and Jonathan become the Scriptures, which Bede explicitly states will be a spiritual help to our torpor, just as the arms delivered the people of Israel from fleshly enemies.[33] Now what Jonathan was able to do in 1 Samuel 14 was launch a surprise attack on the Philistines which turned into Israel's first victory over the Philistines. In Bede's hands this is a story whereby the preachers and teachers in the Church were the first to engage with the enemies, heretical or pagan, but once the battle began the rest of the people joined in the rout.[34] To return to the *Historia ecclesiastica*, these parallels would put Coifi in the position of Jonathan. Paulinus's preaching gave him the necessary spiritual armour to take up the sword and the lance and to inflict the initial defeat on the paganism of Northumbria.[35] The common people thought Coifi mad, just as there were Israelites who were not initially in the army of Saul. Just as King Saul and the rest of the people joined Jonathan in the pursuit of victory, so too after Coifi had

[31] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 2.13.

[32] For example, see: *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 2, lines 1470–85 and 1792–841.

[33] *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 2, lines 1865–7: 'unde nostro torpore adiutus cotidie facit nobis spiritalis quod tunc Israheli carnalis aduersarius fecisse describitur'.

[34] *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 2, lines 1880–2164, esp. 2121–33.

[35] For a very martial, conflict oriented description of the role of a priest see: *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 2, lines 2065–98 (commenting on 1 Samuel 14.18–19).

destroyed the shrine the king and the rest of the people joined the victory: 'So King Edwin, with all the nobles of his race and a vast number of common people, received the faith and regeneration by holy baptism'.[36] Thus the entrance of Coifi and the people of Northumbria into salvation history was not merely about the salvation of the people, but the sheer bellicose description of that entrance, even to the point of echoing Virgil's description of the sack of Troy (*Aeneid* 2.501–2) in the last lines of the chapter, hints less at a future of tranquillity than of warfare and struggle.[37]

Thus we have seen that we must remain with Coifi through the whole passage in order to appreciate Bede's understanding of the role of religion. Religion, that is Christianity, was not about the things of this earth for Bede, but about the heavenly kingdom, although there were to be earthly struggles with regard to this heavenly kingdom. Indeed it is striking that none of the major kings in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica* seem to perfectly fit the pattern of Clovis or Constantine with respect to temporal benefit, that is, they were not bribed into the faith in Bede's narrative.[38] Æthelberht did not receive victory as a divine exchange and Oswald was already Christian before his very Constantinian experience at Heavenfield.[39] Even Edwin who made a very Clovis-like deal with Paulinus in 2.9, did not convert due to victory over his enemies, but had to be persuaded by the words of Paulinus in 2.12.

Adversity and the Christian Life

If Christianity did not necessarily provide material prosperity in this life in some Eusebian manner, not even to kings, then what did it mean to be a Christian with regard to the temporal order?[40] Or, to put it another way: what should Northumbrians expect for the future, now that they and their kingdom were Christian? Bede's response in his exegetical works is very clear: adversity.

[36] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 2.14: 'Igitur accepit rex Eduini cum cunctis gentis suae nobilibus ac plebe perplurima fidem et lauacrum sanctae regerationis'. Translation: Colgrave and Mynors, *BEH*, 187.

[37] Virgil, *Aeneid*, II, lines 501–2 (ed. R.A.B. Mynors, *P. Vergili Maronis opera*, 142); identified by Plummer, *VBOH*, I, 113.

[38] For an alternative view, see J. Campbell, 'Bede I', in his *Essays in Anglo-Saxon history* (London, 1986), 1–28, at 11–13. For a view of the temporal benefits of conversion, see generally: Higham, *Convert Kings*.

[39] See I.N. Wood, 'Constantinian crosses in Northumbria', in *The place of the cross in Anglo-Saxon England*, eds C.E. Karkov, S.L. Keefer and K.L. Jolly (Woodbridge, 2006), 3–13.

[40] For Eusebius's position see Chesnut, *First Christian histories*, 81–2.

When we turn to Bede's biblical commentaries we are often confronted with descriptions of enemies and adversaries of the Church. Bede often focused on what the biblical text revealed about the Church rather than the individual soul. One has only to think of *De templo*, in which Bede was able to transform the physical description of the Temple and its ornaments into an extended discussion of the Church; in short the work is almost a treatise on ecclesiology.[41] The overall perspective gained from the commentaries is that the Church was, is, and will be under constant attack.

Bede's Genesis commentary is a useful place to find information about the nature and workings of adversaries of the Church. From the very beginning of human history, according to Bede, there has been a conflict between the wicked and the elect. In this perspective we can clearly see the guiding hand of Augustine of Hippo. One has only to look at the source index of the critical edition of *In Genesim* to recognise Bede's profound indebtedness to Augustine, especially *De civitate Dei*.[42] The story of Cain and Abel affirmed for Bede what he saw to be one of the constants of salvation history, that there would always be those who persecuted the saints in this life: 'But the life of the elect is properly the life which is to come, to which in order that they may come the more blessedly, they are killed in this life daily and are counted as sheep for the slaughter'.[43] Furthermore the faithlessness of the damned and their persecution of the saints will last until the end of time.[44] It is the Augustinian contrast between Babel/Babylon and Jerusalem in this Genesis commentary, however, that provided Bede with the most fruitful ground for exploring the nature of evil. Bede drew together a number of observations from the text of Genesis in order to create his sustained treatment of the nature of the reprobate. He links Nimrod, Babylon and the Tower of Babel all together in a single narrative. In the biblical text Nimrod and Babylon, reported in Genesis 10.8–12, and the Tower of Babel, in Genesis 11.1–9, do not seem to be related. Yet following Augustine, Bede considered

[41] See J. O'Reilly, 'Introduction', in *Bede: On the Temple*, trans. S. Connolly (Liverpool, 1995), xvii–lv, esp. xxii–xxxiii.

[42] C.W. Jones (ed.), *Bedae Venerabilis opera exegetica*, CCSL 118A (Turnout, 1967), 254–8. The quantity of citation to the *De Civitate Dei* is only parallelled by Bede's use of Augustine's *De Genesi ad litteram*. For a discussion of Augustine's influence on Bede, see: A.T. Thacker, *Bede and Augustine of Hippo: history and figure in sacred text* (Jarrow Lecture, 2005), esp. 15–25.

[43] *Libri quattuor in principium Genesis*, 2, lines 31–3 (citing Psalms 43.22): 'At uero electorum uita proprie futura est uita, ad quam ut felicius perueniant, mortificantur in hac uita quotidie et aestimantur ut oues occisionis'. Translation: C.B. Kendall, *Bede: On Genesis* (Liverpool, 2007), 141.

[44] *Libri quattuor in principium Genesis*, 2, lines 459–62.

Babel a tower of the city of Babylon.[45] Nevertheless it is what Bede did with this confluence of biblical structures and people in his spiritual interpretation section that is most revealing.

Babylon and its inhabitants represent for Bede the wicked. What does it take to be an inhabitant of the city of the Devil? The catalogue Bede provided was most exhaustive: the earthly, those who do wicked deeds, worldly philosophers, subtle heretics, the vain, the proud, pleasure seekers, wicked teachers, Jews who deny Christ, false Catholics, schismatics and of course the Devil himself and his demons.[46] In short, 'All the wicked make a city for themselves whenever, ignoring the protection of God's commandments, they follow the feelings and desires of their own heart in doing or saying whatever they please'.[47] In these descriptions of the wicked, they are most frequently defined not in what they are doing for themselves, but instead in what they are doing against the Church. Indeed for Bede the unity of the wicked rests only on one principle: the rejection of the unity created by life in Christ.[48] For Bede, the wicked had diverse crimes, whether they perverted worship by worshipping false gods or attempted to pervert faith by being heretics, they received a singular reward, that is, eternal damnation, since they rejected unity with Christ and his Church.[49]

This perspective of the world divided into two camps, those for Christ and his Church and those against is a dominant theme in Bede's worldview.[50] Thus his views on what would bring adversity in this life were very much oriented towards his vision of the world grounded in the Church. Adversity in this life was certain, because it has been divinely revealed that forces would always seek to destroy and corrupt the Church. Comments about this spiritual warfare pervade all of Bede's commentaries, but a view from one of his earliest commentaries will be sufficient to describe Bede's general position. In his commentary on 1 Peter, Bede reassured his readers that they should not think they are no longer members of Christ's body because they suffer. Instead he presented suffering and persecution, building on the words of Gregory the Great, as the norm for the life of the elect on earth: 'it is very ancient and constant for the elect of God

[45] Augustine, *De civitate Dei* (eds B. Dombart and A. Kalb, CCSL 47, 48), 20.4.

[46] *Libri quattuor in principium Genesis*, 3, lines 542–709.

[47] *Libri quattuor in principium Genesis*, 3, lines 670–73: 'Faciunt sibi ciuitatem omnes reprobi cum, neglecto praesidio praeceptorum Dei, sensus ac desideria sui cordis in agendis siue loquendis quae ipsos libet sequuntur'. Translation: Kendall, *On Genesis*, 237.

[48] *Libri quattuor in principium Genesis*, 3, lines 435–61.

[49] *Libri quattuor in principium Genesis*, 3, lines 670–89.

[50] P.C. Hilliard, 'The Venerable Bede as scholar, gentile and preacher', in *Ego trouble: authors and their identities in the early Middle Ages*, eds R. Corradini, M. Gillis, R. McKitterick and I. van Renswoude (Vienna, 2010), 101–9, at 106–7.

to bear the adversities of the present life for eternal salvation'.[51] Bede then gave a detailed description of the ways in which the devil seeks the ruin of the Church and souls, by citing a long passage from Cyprian to comment on 1 Peter 5.8, 'Be sober, watchful, because your adversary, the devil, goes around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour'.[52] In his commentary on Luke, Bede even presented Peter himself as succumbing to this evil camp, the remedy for which could only come when the apostle extracted himself from the worldly company that led him to deny Christ.[53] Indeed even in his *Chronica maiora*, Bede altered the genre of chronicle writing to insert an allegorical comment on Enoch that invoked a vision of the world divided between the elect working for the coming Sabbath and the reprobate who were content with present happiness, invoking towards the very beginning of his chronicle Augustine's *De Civitate Dei* and the bishop of Hippo's division of the world into the two cities.[54] It seems likely that the frequent invocations of Augustine's name and even the title of his work *De Civitate Dei* clustered at the beginning of the chronicle were meant to inspire the reader to survey the history recorded in the *Chronica maiora* with Augustinian eyes.

Now if we return to the *Historia ecclesiastica* we can see ample evidence of the spiritual warfare which Bede stated was ancient and constant. Even the most cursory reading of the *Historia ecclesiastica* reveals a world entrenched in this martial perspective. From the persecution of Alban through to the end of the book, the Devil and his band, whether actual demons or heretics, were very active. Germanus and Paulinus were both opposed by demons.[55] That the conversion of Britain was a contest between Christ and the Devil was made clear by Bede: 'for the tyranny of the devil had been recently overthrown and the reign of Christ had now begun'.[56] Bede praised Gregory the Great (d. 605), among other reasons, for the Pope having won the English nation from the power of Satan

---

[51] *In epistulas septem catholicas* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 121, 181–342), *In epistolam I Petri*, 4, lines 133–6: 'Vnde bene cum dixisset, nolite mirari in feruore, addidit, quasi noui aliquid uobis contingat, quia ualde est antiquum et frequens electos Dei uitae praesentis aduersa pro aeterna salute tolerare'. Translation: D. Hurst, *The Commentary on the seven Catholic Epistles of Bede the Venerable* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1985), 112.

[52] 1 Peter 5.8 (Revised Standard Version). For the catalogue of the Devil's strategies, see: *In epistulas septem catholicas*, *In epistolam I Petri*, 5, lines, 80–98.

[53] *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, 6, lines 1086–165.

[54] *De temporum ratione*, 66, *s.a.* 622 and 874; for a further discussion of Bede's use of allegory in the *Chronica Maiora* see P.C. Hilliard, 'Sacred and secular history in the writings of Bede (+735)' (PhD. Thesis, University of Cambridge, 2007), 149–53.

[55] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 1.17; 2.9.

[56] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.14: 'ubi nuper expulsa diaboli tyrannide Christus iam regnare coeperat'.

to the faith of Christ.[57] In Bede's accounts of the visionary journeys of Fursa and Dryhthelm to the otherworld, demonic activity is very pronounced.[58] One particular instance of spiritual warfare, however, should hold our attention for the discussion in hand. In 5.13 Bede related an anecdote concerning a nameless man who fell ill and was suffering cruel pains. Even in the face of such suffering and King Cenred's advice, the man clung to worldly bravery and would not be moved by fear. Bede explicitly stated that this worldliness that removed the opportunity for repentance from the man was of diabolical origin. Thus we see fulfilled in this story Bede's claim that worldliness was often used by the Devil to capture souls. This theme is further highlighted by the next chapter where Bede contrasted a worldly craftsman, damned for his behaviour and granted a vision of his damnation, with Stephen who, about to give up his life for heavenly things, was rewarded with a glimpse of heaven.[59]

Yet Bede was no dualist. The persecutions and sufferings of the Church in this life were the will of God and according to Bede these events had a purpose. In the commentaries Bede had three primary roles for adversity. The first role is as a punitive measure sent by God to destroy the wicked. The second role is to move God's people to repentance. The final role of adversity is as a means of perfecting Christians by detaching them from the world.

In the commentaries Bede informed the Northumbrian Church that God did indeed punish the wicked here on earth. While commenting on the meaning of Isaiah 21.21–2 he made it clear that this temporal punishment of the wicked was not reserved for the end of days, but could occur in this life: 'As the histories report, this [to perish] is precisely what happened to all the instigators of wars who fought against the Church'.[60] Not only were authors of persecutions in general punished, but God even destroyed the enemies of David 'because they harried a holy man'.[61] When commenting on the Epistle of Jude, Bede explains that the murmurs in the desert, the fallen angels and the denizens of Sodom and Gomorrah were all punished and condemned for rejecting Jesus in one

[57] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 2.1.

[58] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 3.19; 5.12.

[59] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.14.

[60] *De eo quod ait Isaias* (ed. J.P. Migne, PL 94, cols 702–10), col. 707: 'Juxta quod in omnibus, qui contra Ecclesiam exarserunt, bellorum auctoribus factum historiae tradunt'. Translation: A. Holder, *Bede: A biblical miscellany* (Liverpool, 1999), 48.

[61] *In Regum librum XXX Quaestiones* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119, 293–322), 5, lines 12–15: 'Tunc enim requisiuit dominus de manu inimicorum Dauid quare uirum sanctum afflixerint, tunc cogebantur rationem reddere odiorum quibus contra illum tanto tempore saeuierant'. Translation: W.T. Foley, *Bede: A biblical miscellany*, 98–9.

way or another.[62] Indeed, 'the righteous judge both now and later strikes some persons, if their faults require it'.[63] Finally the destruction of the Jewish kingdom at the hands of the Romans was seen by Bede as punishment for their role in the persecution and death of Jesus.[64] While Bede made room for the punishment of the wicked in this life, generally he was more focused on eternal punishment. Indeed Bede turned the statement in Genesis that 'Whosoever shall shed human blood, his blood shall be shed' to mean that the punishment was not physical, that is having to do with blood, but eternal having to do with one's eschatological fate.[65]

There is certainly much in the *Historia* that highlights temporal punishment for impiety. Probably the most famous punishment of the wicked is the destruction of the British by Æthelfrith and his army which fulfilled Augustine's prophecy against the British: 'namely that those heretics would also suffer the vengeance of temporal death because they had despised the offer of everlasting salvation'.[66] Eadbald was punished for his behaviour and the apostate kings of the East Saxons were destroyed by the Gewisse.[67] In both of these cases Bede made it clear that the punishment was of divine origin. Ecgfrith, for attacking an innocent people and ignoring Cuthbert, was defeated due to the avenging hand of God.[68] Thus Bede demonstrated with the history of his own island his theological understanding that God would punish the wicked in this life and the next.

Although Bede clearly believed that the wicked would be punished, maybe in this life but certainly in the next, punishment was not an end in Bede's theological vision. Most often Bede construed punishment and adversity sent by God as a call for sinners to repent, to amend their ways. In this perspective adversity took on a pedagogical dimension in Bede's theological vision. In his

---

[62] *In epistulas septem catholicas*, *In epistolam Judae*, lines 42–89.

[63] *In epistulas septem catholicas*, *In epistolam Judae*, lines 60–62: 'quia iustus iudex non nullos culpis exigentibus et nunc et postmodum percutit'. Translation: Hurst, *Commentary on the seven Catholic Epistles*, 243.

[64] *Expositio in Canticum Abacuc prophetae* (ed. J.E. Hudson, CCSL 119B, 381–409), lines 500–523; see also *In Lucae evangelium expositio*, 6, lines 83–159.

[65] *Libri quattuor in principium Genesis*, 2, lines 2175–88.

[66] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 2.2: 'ut etiam temporalis interitus ultione sentirent perfidi, quod oblata sibi perpetuae salutis consilia spreuerant'. Translation: Colgrave and Mynors, *BEH*, 143. It is interesting here that Bede has written this passage as spurning not simply eternal life, but the offer of eternal life, since that is precisely what the British had refused to do, to offer the council of eternal life to the invaders.

[67] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 2.5.

[68] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.26.

Habakkuk commentary Bede stated openly that the proud are saved by the Lord by being temporally humbled.[69] One of the clearest statements of how this tough love, the sending of adversity, was meant to help people is found in the Ezra commentary. God sent violent winds, floods, rains, heavy snows, droughts and plagues as open signs for sinners to repent of their condition which was the cause of the disturbance of the natural world; the violence of nature was an admonishment of the divine.[70] The effect of punishment was to strengthen the people of God. Furthermore, Bede believed that in the history of Israel the people were at their holiest just after they returned from exile. The children of Israel returned from their poverty and hardship more devout than when they had experienced wealth and freedom, which had led them astray.[71] Temporal affliction, therefore, was celebrated by Bede as a means of leading people back to the Lord.[72]

Into the *Historia* he placed numerous examples of those who heeded the lessons of affliction and also some, like the East Saxons after their defeat by the Gewisse, who failed to learn from God's tough love. Bede's narrative voice on this issue of learning from adversity is frequently present; Bede was not shy to moralise. In other words Bede often did not leave it to his reader to decide how recorded events should be interpreted. Bede's account of the events at Coldingham is very instructive on this point. After describing how the monastic community was called to and then failed in performing penance, Bede stated that punishment and vengeance fell on the community, just when the community thought they had *pax et securitas.*[73] Yet, this judgement was not sufficient for Bede, since he added at the end of the chapter the following more explicit comment:

> It seemed desirable to include this story in our History so as to warn the reader about the workings of the Lord and how terrible He is in His dealings with the children of men, in order that we should not at any time indulge in fleshly delights nor pay so little heed to the judgment of God that his wrath should come suddenly upon us and He should in His righteous anger afflict us with temporal loss, or, it may be, judge us still more sternly and bear us away to everlasting perdition.[74]

---

[69] *Expositio in Canticum Abacuc prophetae*, lines 266–77.

[70] *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 2, lines 1789–803.

[71] *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 1, lines 766–94 and 2, lines 674–89.

[72] *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 2, lines 901–11.

[73] 1 Thessalonians 5.3.

[74] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.25: 'Haec ideo nostrae historiae inserenda credidimus, ut admoneremus lectorem operum Domini, quam terribilis in consiliis super filios hominum; ne

Thus the point is very clear: Coldingham might not have learned from punishment in time, but you, reader, still have a chance. There is also one other lesson of Coldingham that seems important in this discussion. The fear of physical punishment inspired the community to repent. However, their repentance was not a true repentance and they returned to their worldly delights once they felt the physical punishment was not forthcoming. Thus they adopted the mentality of the bad thief by reforming themselves for the things of this world. Or to put it another way, those who 'seek temporal benefits from the Lord to the neglect of eternal ones adhere to the literal, carnal understanding of the Old Testament'.[75]

While there are examples like the inhabitants of Coldingham and the British, who failed to learn their lessons, nevertheless Bede also recounted many success stories in the *Historia ecclesiastica*. Chad exhorted people to repent when the skies were disturbed by the Lord.[76] A certain Irish scholar was moved to repent when faced with death and the thought of hell.[77] Certainly the adversity of the souls in the afterlife inspired Dryhthelm and Fursa to renew their efforts of pious living here on earth.[78] Bede, drawing on Gildas, showed that even the British were capable of learning the lessons of adversity.[79] The question remains, whether the Northumbrians would heed the many warnings provided by Bede in the *Historia ecclesiastica* or need the application of sterner medicine by the Divine Physician. In 5.23 Bede had already told his Northumbrian readers that the heavens were disturbed by a comet which he explicitly stated was *dirae cladis praesagae*.[80] If we connect this disturbance of heaven with Bede's comments in *In Ezram et Neemiam* about God disturbing nature as a call to repentance, then it appears that the Lord might be getting ready to start teaching some lessons.[81] It may be rhetorical humility, but in the prologue of *De templo*, when recommending as a source of consolation the recollection of the suffering of the

---

forte nos tempore aliquot carnis inlecebris seruientes, minusque Dei iudicium formidantes, repentina eius ira corripiat, et uel temporalibus damnis iuste saeuiens affligat, uel ad perpetuam perditionem districtius examinans tollat'. Translation: Colgrave and Mynors, *BEH*, 427.

[75] *Libri quattuor in principium Genesis*, 4, lines 1746–7: 'sed quia temporalia a Domino beneficia neglectis aeternis requirunt'. Translation: Kendall, *On Genesis*, 321–2.

[76] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.3.

[77] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 3.13.

[78] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 3.19; 5.12.

[79] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 1.22: 'Attamen recente adhuc memoria calamitatis et cladis inflictae seruabant utcumque reges, sacerdotes, priuati et optimates suum quique ordinem'.

[80] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.23.

[81] While I am not willing to read the appearance of the comet in 5.23 as a prelude to the end of time, an argument for this position can be found in Darby, *Bede and the end of time*, esp. 211–12.

saints, Bede chose repentance as the default response to adversity for himself and his reader:

> We, on the other hand, are more often chastised for our transgressions by the merciful providence of our creator. Let us look into our conscience again with wholesome compunction and earnestly wash away with a bath of tears what in our laxity we have committed by yielding to insidious allurements, and so corrected and restored to the hope of eternal life with the Lord's assistance may we merit to attain the fellowship of those who suffered in innocence.[82]

Thus even Bede, the same Bede who could forcefully call for the reform of his people, who would take on the mantle of the fathers for the sake of his own people, felt that he should respond to affliction by searching his own conscience and rooting out worldly attachments.[83]

Yet God did not only send adversity to the sinners, he also afflicted the saints. Indeed for Bede, adversity was a gift from God to detach His chosen people from the world and to refine them in the here and now. When explaining the story of Abimelek and Sarah with an allegorical interpretation Bede stated:

> [By the seizure and return of Sarah to Abraham] it is signified that the Church is to be assailed very often by the temptations of worldly powers, with the permission of course of the Lord, who deigns to be called her husband for the sake of his gift of divine protection and grace, so that, having been tested by adversaries, it may become more clearly evident how strong she is in faith, by what chastity she is devoted to God, and finally by how great a care of her Creator she is always to

[82] *De templo* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A, 143–234), prologue, lines 40–45: 'Nos autem saepius misericordi prouisione conditoris nostri pro nostris castigamur erratibus; salubri compunctione ad conscientiam nostrum redeuntes puniamus sollicite lacrimis diluentibus quod illecebris fallentibus neglegenter admisimus sicque iuuante domino correpti ad spem uitae illorum qui innocentes afflicti sunt mereamur pertinere consortium'. Translation: S. Connolly, *Bede: On the Temple* (Liverpool, 1995), 2.

[83] For Bede as reformer see S. DeGregorio generally, but especially, 'Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam* and the reform of the Northumbrian Church', *Speculum*, 79 (2004), 1–25. For Bede as Father see: S. DeGregorio, 'Footsteps of his own: Bede's commentary on Ezra-Nehemiah', in *Innovation and tradition in the writings of the Venerable Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Morgantown, WV, 2006), 143–68; A.T. Thacker, 'Bede's ideal of reform', in *Ideal and reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon society*, eds P. Wormald, D. Bullough and R. Collins (Oxford, 1983), 130–53; R. Ray, 'Who did Bede think he was?', in *Innovation and tradition*, ed. DeGregorio, 11–35.

> be kept from all the snares of her enemies and is never to be corrupted from the simplicity of faith.[84]

Thus for Bede the afflictions of this world served a twofold purpose: it allowed the bride to refine and display her love, while it allowed the bridegroom to display his loving care. His loving care entailed the blessings of both adversity and clarity:

> For the Lord is indeed the light of life who tests the hearts of his faithful silently, at times illuminating them with the sweetness of celestial grace, at others clouding them with the burdens of this life, so that, instructed by temporal adversities, they might desire eternal good more ardently.[85]

Tribulation then refined the saints on earth and broke their attachment to the world. In *De templo* those esteemed by the world could be incorporated into the Church only after they had been freed from their pride by the Lord's reproof and had been shaped by the truth of the Gospels.[86] Indeed even being anxious about the adversity and prosperity of the wicked and innocent in this life was still being too worldly and according to Bede for this preoccupation the prophet Habakkuk repented.[87] Carroll observed the importance of the heavenly reward in Bede's thought, giving to the faithful hope and courage in the face of the disturbances of the world.[88] Finally Bede linked the sin of Adam and Eve directly with carnal desires and the path of restoration to temporal afflictions: 'truly the return to the heavenly fatherland, from which we departed through the foolishness of transgression and the appetite for carnal pleasures, lies open

---

[84] *Libri quattuor in principium Genesis*, 4, lines 1461–70: 'Quod si in hac lectione, ubi Sara Abraham permittente amata a regibus rapitur, sed Domino procurante intemerata uiro redditur, allegoricum quid sentire delectate significatur ecclesia temptantionibus potestatum mundanarum saepius esse pulsanda – permittente utique Domino, qui uir eius ob donum supernae protectionis et gratiae uocari dignatus est, ut examinata aduersis, manifestius quam sit fide firma, qua castitate Deo deuota, quanta denique sui conditoris custodia ab omnibus semper sit hostium insidiis tutanda, clarescat, neque umquam a suae fidei simplicitate corrumpenda'. Translation: Kendall, *On Genesis*, 314.

[85] *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 3, lines 128–32: 'Lumen etenim uitae dominus est qui corda fidelium suorum silentio temptat dum eos aliquando dulcedine gratiae caelestis illustrat aliquando pressuris uitae praesentis obnubilat ut temporalibus aduersis eruditi ardentius aeterna bona desiderent'. Translation: DeGregorio, *On Ezra and Nehemiah*, 158–9.

[86] *De templo*, 1, lines 84–91.

[87] *Expositio in Canticum Abacuc prophetae*, lines 88–93.

[88] Carroll, *Spiritual teachings*, 183.

to us through the discipline of heavenly knowledge and the labour of temporal afflictions'.[89]

Throughout the *Historia* Bede gave examples where the saintly were tested and refined by the fires of adversity, thereby beginning their return to the heavenly fatherland. In addition to the martyrs who gained their reward through adversity, we see that Germanus was afflicted bodily by the devil: 'the treacherous foe ... caused Germanus to fall and bruise his foot, not knowing that his merits like those of Job would be increased by bodily affliction'.[90] Gregory's merits as well were increased by frequent pains, which Bede reinforced with the following summary: 'Yet always amid these troubles, when he carefully reflected on the testimony of the scriptures that, 'He scourgeth every son whom he receiveth', the more severely he was oppressed by present evils, the more surely he was refreshed by eternal hope'.[91] Æthelburg, abbess of Barking was perfected in weakness by the onset of a bodily disease, 'so that any traces of sin remaining among her virtues through ignorance or carelessness might be burned away by the fires of prolonged suffering'.[92] Hild, abbess of Whitby too was subject to the trial of bodily affliction and during her affliction she taught her community: 'when health of the body was granted to them, to serve the Lord dutifully and, when in adversity or sickness, always to return thanks to the Lord faithfully'.[93] In the case of both Æthelburg and Hild, Bede explicitly invoked 2 Corinthians 12.9. This is the passage where Paul alludes to a thorn in his flesh that he asked the Lord to withdraw, but the Lord responded to him: 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness'. Bede provided commentary from Augustine on this passage in his compilation of excerpts from Augustine's writings on the Pauline Epistles.

---

[89] *Libri quattuor in principium Genesis*, 1, lines 2301–305: 'quia nimirum per disciplinam nobis scientiae celestis et per laborem afflictionum temporalium reditus ad supernam patriam patet, ex qua per stultitiam praeuaricationis perque appetitum carnalium uoluptatum discessimus'. Translation: Kendall, *On Genesis*, 138.

[90] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 1.19: 'Vnde dum redeunt, insidiator inimicus, casualibus laqueis praeparatis, Germani pedem lapsus occasione contriuit, ignorans merita illius, sicut Iob beatissimi, affliction corporis'. Translation: Colgrave and Mynors, *BEH*, 61.

[91] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 2.1: 'Verum inter haec, dum sollicitus pensaret quia scriptura tests 'Omnis filius qui recipitur flagellatur', quo malis praesentibus durius deprimebatur, eo de aeterna certius praesumtione respirabat'. Translation: Colgrave and Mynors, *BEH*, 129.

[92] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.9: 'uidelicet ut, quicquid in ea uitii sordidantis inter uirtutes per ignorantiam uel incuriam resedisset, totum hoc caminus diutinae tribulationis excoqueret'. Translation: Colgrave and Mynors, *BEH*, 361.

[93] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.23: 'Nam suo praedocta exemplo monebat omnes, et in salute accepta corporis Domino obtemperanter seruiendum, et in aduersis rerum siue infirmitatibus membrorum fideliter Domino esse gratias semper agendas'. Translation: Colgrave and Mynors, *BEH*, 413.

The central point of the passage is that God as physician does not give the patient what he wants, but rather what he truly needs; that is, God cares for his patient's eternal salvation and not his temporal cravings.[94]

Hope

Was the Church always to suffer, if it was so beneficial to the pursuit of the heavenly fatherland? The answer is both yes and no. Yes, because of the constant state of spiritual warfare, but no, because the Lord would not forget his Church:

> from the beginning of the created world all the way to the end, the wicked will keep busy to remove Christ from the hearts of the pious, and [Christ] will defend the pious lest they be overcome by the wicked, [the pious] with whom he himself promised to remain all the days all the way to the completion of the age.[95]

For Bede one of the main ways that Christ would remain with His Church until the end of the age was in the form of champions.[96] The champions of the Church were a prevalent theme in Bede's commentaries, and especially in his Old Testament commentaries. These are people whom God raised up at certain times to combat the enemies of the Church and to defend the people. In his commentary on Samuel, Bede was concerned in a number of places to describe how champions of the Church defended the people, especially from heresy.[97] It was not the place of every Christian to defeat heretics and philosophical attacks, but the people were to join in once a doctor of the Church had routed the enemy.[98] In *De tabernaculo* Bede emphasised that the Lord would always keep

---

[94] Bede, *Collectio Bedae presbyteri ex opusculis sancti Augustini in Epistulas Pauli Apostoli* (unpublished; trans. D. Hurst, *Bede the Venerable: Excerpts from the Works of Saint Augustine on the Letters of the Blessed Apostle Paul*), 260 (on 2 Corinthians 12.8–9). For a summary of the present state of the text see G.H. Brown, *A companion to Bede* (Woodbridge, 2009), 68; Thacker, *Bede and Augustine*, 7, n. 34.

[95] *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 4, lines 213–18: 'ab initio mundi nascentis usque ad finem et impii Christum piorum cordibus auferre satagunt et ipse pios ne umquam ab impiis expugnentur defendit cum quibus se mansurum promisit omnibus diebus usque ad consummationem saeculi et alibi, Cum transieris, inquit, per aquas tecum ero, et flumina non operient te'.

[96] The inspiration for this term is the word *propugnatores* in *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 2, line 1201. The term is being used as an umbrella concept for all those who defend the Church, thus it includes preachers, doctors and reformers.

[97] See especially *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 2, lines 1200–240 and 4, lines 2118–92.

[98] Bede, *In primam partem Samuhelis*, 2, lines 2101–64.

his Church well provisioned with teachers.[99] What made these teachers effective is that they preached a message of detachment from the world by both their words and examples.[100] An apt summary of Bede's attitude towards the role of champions and his firm belief that the Lord would provide champions for his Church is found in a prayer that breaks into his commentary on Nehemiah:

> For how many are there among God's people who willingly desire to obey the divine commands but are hindered from being able to fulfil what they desire not only by a lack of temporal means and by poverty but also by the examples of those who seem to be endowed with the garb of religion, but who exact an immense tax and weight of worldly goods from those who they claim to be in charge of while giving nothing for their eternal salvation ... Would that some Nehemiah (i.e. a 'consoler from the Lord') might come in our own days and restrain our errors, kindle our breasts to love of the divine, and strengthen our hands by turning them away from our own pleasures to establishing Christ's city.[101]

Bede yearned for a champion to come to his present day Church and save her from worldly figures purporting to be religious. If we are to take the promises of the Lord Bede discovered in his *De tabernaculo* seriously, then for Bede this was not a prayer in vain, but one which would receive fulfilment. Eventually a leader would come to rally the troops and be a true leader of the heavenly legions because he would practice what he preached.[102]

Bede's *Historia* is also filled with many examples of champions of the faith. While apart from the Diocletian persecution there is not much direct oppression in the *Historia*, nevertheless there are moments that Bede would classify as adversity. Thus Germanus saved the British from the Saxons, but

---

[99] *De tabernaculo* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A, 5–139), 1, lines 869–908.

[100] *In Marci evangelium expositio*, 1, lines 991–8; *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 1, lines 282–6.

[101] *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 3, lines 826–33: 'Quanti enim sunt in populo Dei qui diuinis libenter cupiunt obtemperare mandatis sed ne possint implere quod cupiunt et inopia rerum temporalium ac paupertate et exemplis retardantur eorum qui habitu religionis uidentur esse praediti cum ipsi ab eis quibus praeesse uidentur et immensum rerum saecularium pondus ac uectigal exigunt et nihil eorum saluti perpetuae ... conferunt. Atque utinam aliquis in diebus nostris Neemias, id est consolator a domino, aduenies nostros compescat errores nostra ad amorem diuinum praecordia accendat nostras a propriis uoluptatibus ad constituendam Christi ciuitatem manus auertens confortet'. Translation: DeGregorio, *On Ezra and Nehemiah*, 184. For a discussion of this passage in the context of reform see: DeGregorio, '*In Ezram et Neemiam* and the reform of the Northumbrian Church', esp. 11–13; J. Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon society* (Oxford, 2005), 155–6; DeGregorio, *On Ezra and Nehemiah*, xxxii–xxxiii.

[102] *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 3, lines 833–65.

more importantly from the Pelagians. Augustine saved the people of Kent from idolatry. Aidan saved the failing Northumbrian Church. Cedd recalled the East Saxons. Finally Ecgberht and Ceolfrith saved the Irish and the Picts from schism. Kings too could be champions of the Church, which was stated explicitly in the letter from Gregory to Æthelberht: 'Almighty God raises up certain good men to be rulers over nations in order that he may by their means bestow the gifts of his righteousness upon all those over whom they are set'.[103] Oswald and Oswiu were able to deliver the Northumbrians through their faith. The stories of these champions could inspire the reader to place his hope in the providence of God. God continued to care for his Church through all the difficulties presented by Bede. It should also be noted that for Bede the Irish proved to be such effective champions of the faith precisely because they were detached from the world. In 3.26, just after the synod of Whitby, Bede stated that people flocked to the monks for spiritual blessings, because they desired 'to serve God and not the world, to satisfy the soul and not the belly'.[104] This is a brief, but pointed reminder that detachment from the world greatly empowered champions in the spiritual warfare. Despising all worldly things was an essential ingredient to Augustine's success as well.[105] In light of the parallels between Coifi and Jonathan, maybe we should now add Coifi to this list of those who fought for the Church.

There were of course some candidates for champions in Bede's contemporary Northumbrian Church who could deliver the Church from her present troubles. These present troubles have been well investigated by DeGregorio and Thacker.[106] Bede's *Epistula ad Ecgbertum* can indeed be seen as an invitation to Ecgberht to become a champion in cooperation with the king. Of course, Bede himself fulfilled the role of a champion of the Church. He sought to restrain error in his commentaries and didactic works, to kindle a love of the divine with all his works and, as we have seen, to turn his people away from the things of the world. Thus Bede fulfilled his own prayer.[107] In case one were wondering, after reading the *Historia*, if Bede was sufficiently qualified to take up this role, since sincerity of life was so important to the function of the champions, Bede even provided the

---

[103] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 1.32: 'Propter hoc omnipotens Deus bonos quosque ad populorum regimina preducit, ut per eos omnibus, quibus praelati fuerint, dona suae pietatis inpendat'. Translation: Colgrave and Mynors, *BEH*, 111.

[104] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 3.26: 'Tota enim fuit tunc sollicitudo doctoribus illis Deo seruiendi, non saeculo; tota cura cordis excolendi, non uentris'. Translation: Colgrave and Mynors, *BEH*, 311.

[105] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 1.26.

[106] See n. 83 above.

[107] *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 3, lines 833–46.

reader with his spiritual credentials at the end of 5.24. In all of Bede's vigorous efforts to reform the Church in Northumbria, whether by commentary, history, or letter, avarice ranks very high on his list of present difficulties.[108] Why Bede was so angry about greed and struggled so vigorously to oppose it in his writings is clear in the theological exploration above. The things of this world were a tool in the hand of the Devil meant to drag down a soul. God, the Divine Physician, in his infinite mercy sent adversity in this life particularly to free people from their attachment to the world. Thus Bede's activities as a reformer were not just about what was correct, but were involved in the highest cosmological struggle and the stakes were high, that is, salvation itself. Thus in the end Bede's attempt to turn his people, and particularly his fellow clerics, from worldly things was a deeply pastoral action.[109]

In all of this discussion of adversity, spiritual warfare and danger of worldliness it is easy to forget that Bede did have a positive role for prosperity in his theological vision and in the *Historia*. Bede did not explore the benefit of prosperity nearly as often as he expounded on the benefits of adversity, yet Bede was a monk and did not believe in radical poverty. Thus, temporal blessings were still good things, but what made them good was how they could be used. Bede was very explicit in *De tabernaculo* about the usefulness of prosperity to the Church in this world. First of all he saw the tranquillity of his own day as a grace given by God to enable the living Christians to study the past, especially faithful members of the Church from the past.[110] Also temporal benefits were to be held by the Church in the present, but the purpose of these material benefits was so that grace could be increased.[111] Indeed the preachers were to be supported materially by the people and, through this support, the people would participate in the task of preaching.[112] In all of these comments about prosperity, we can feel the influence of Augustine of Hippo's understanding of the proper use of things. However these comments about the benefits of material blessings were often accompanied by strong condemnations of worldliness.[113]

The *Historia* is indeed full of many material blessings for the Church, especially from royal largess. Bede could even celebrate prosperity on occasion,

---

[108] Carroll, *Spiritual teachings*, 148–50, long ago observed Bede's intense hatred of avarice.

[109] Hilliard, 'Bede as scholar', 107–9.

[110] *De tabernaculo*, 2, lines 794–814.

[111] *De tabernaculo*, 2, lines 1226–30.

[112] *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 1, lines 297–303 and 3, lines 1822–9. See also Carroll, *Spiritual teachings*, 147–8; DeGregorio, *On Ezra and Nehemiah*, 17 n. 4.

[113] For example, see: *De tabernaculo*, 3, lines 136–43, 614–21 and 869–73 for powerful condemnations that would temper any worldly impulses on the part of spiritual leaders.

such as his famous account of the proverbial peace of Edwin's reign.[114] Clearly prosperity could assist in the preaching of the message, such as the impact of Wilfrid's fishing lessons on Selsey: 'By this good turn the bishop won the hearts of all and they had the greater hope of heavenly blessings from the preaching of one by whose aid they had gained temporal blessing'.[115] It is worth noting that peace achieved by brave Christian kings keeping barbarians at bay was one of the ingredients in Bede's *feliciora tempora*. The other two ingredients, however, were teachers at hand and that 'the desires of all men were set on the joys of the heavenly kingdom'.[116] Peace was not sufficient for Bede; there needed to be a love of heavenly things and access to those things through teachers.

Conclusion

Let us ask Bede again one more time: What will happen to the Northumbrian Church in the future? His answer is the one he gave us: *posterior aetas videbit*. In his commentaries and the *Historia* he has provided the pattern of what it means to be a Christian, a part of the Church, in this world. That pattern included adversity and prosperity, sometimes for the wicked and sometimes for the saints. In the end it was Bede's hope:

> that both in prosperity and adversity we must keep the entrance to our heavenly homeland before the eyes of our mind … whether basking in prosperity or broken in spirit by adversity we may not deviate in any direction from the royal road.[117]

For Bede then, did the prosperity and the comet mentioned in *Historia ecclesiastica* 5.23 portend the coming wrath of the Lord for Northumbria?

---

[114] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 1.16.

[115] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.13: 'Quo beneficio multum antistes cor omnium in suum conuertit amorem, et libentius eo praedicante caelestia sperare coeperunt, cuius ministerio temporalia bona sumserunt'. Translation: Colgrave and Mynors, *BEH*, 375.

[116] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.2: 'Neque umquam prorsus, ex quo Brittaniam petierunt Angli, feliciora fuere tempora, dum et fortissimos Christianosque habentes reges cunctis barbaris nationibus essent terrori, et omnium uota ad nuper audita caelestis regni gaudia penderent, et quicumque lectionibus sacris cuperent erudiri, haberent in promtu magistros qui docerent'. Translation: Colgrave and Mynors, *BEH*, 335.

[117] *De templo*, 2, lines 287–94: 'ut nobis et in prosperis et in aduersis ingressum patriae caelestis ante oculos mentis habendum esse doceant … ut nec prosperis delectati nec fracti asperis a regia uitae uia qua ad promissam nobis hereditatem patriae caelestis gradiendum est ulla in parte declinemus'. Translation: Connolly, *Bede: On the Temple*, 75.

Possibly, but neither prosperity nor adversity could be predicted in the life of the wicked or the just. Thus the end of the *Historia* leaves the reader precisely where Bede wants them: hopeful for the future, but with a twinge of anxiety. Hopeful because Christ has been winning the spiritual warfare, so '*congratulante in fide eius Brittania*'; anxious because the struggle was not yet over. In the end it did not matter what would happen to Northumbria temporally since Bede trusted the Divine Physician. Why else would he celebrate the rebellion of Mercia in *Historia ecclesiastica*? Nevertheless Bede was deeply interested in the future of the Northumbrian people, that is, he was intensely interested in their eschatological fate now that they had entered salvation history, in which prosperity and adversity played an important role for the chosen. So while Bede was confident that the Church would continue to grow until the end of time, his trust in the providence of God also demanded action, the action of pastoring his people away from worldliness by means of his literary works. If Bede were not devoted to the salvation of his people he would not have written the *Historia ecclesiastica* the way that he did. We should not expect anything different from a monk who was well versed in Augustine of Hippo, aware of the constancy of spiritual warfare and suspicious of the enticements of this world.

This page has been left blank intentionally

Chapter 9

Visions of Reform: Bede's Later Writings in Context

Scott DeGregorio

On 5 November 734 Bede wrote a letter to Ecgberht, then the bishop of York. The nature of its occasion is explained in the opening section. A year earlier, Bede had travelled to York to visit Ecgberht for the purpose of study (*gratia legendi*); the implication is that Ecgberht had once been Bede's student, and that the two still fostered such a relationship.[1] They had planned to meet again, drawn by their common love of learning (*ob commune legendi studium*), but ill-health made the journey impossible for the ageing Bede. Grieved over the loss of private conversation (*secreta tibi allocutione*) he desired them to share, wishing much rather to speak in person (*quod corporaliter ueniendo per collocutionem nequiueram*), Bede explains that had to write instead. Then somewhat startlingly, in anticipation of what will follow, he switches his mood to supplication: 'I beg you in the Lord's name not to feel that the intentions of this letter are arrogant, but rather to look upon it as a gift proffered in humility and affection'.[2]

Six months later, Bede was dead.[3] As far as we know, this letter is his last extant writing.[4] One might ask whether he knew it would be. It has the feel of a polished treatise; it is studded with biblical citations, and is most deft in its use

---

1 *Beati Flacci Alcuini Vita* (ed. J.P. Migne, PL 100, cols 88–106), 2 (at col. 93B): 'Postque memoriter lectionem recitatam Psalmorum, beati gentis Anglorum Bedae doctissimi discipulo Hechberto praesuli ...'.

2 Bede, *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* (ed. C. Plummer, *VBOH*, I, 405–23), 1: 'Precorque te per Dominum, ne harum apices litterarum arrogantiae supercilium esse suspiceris, sed obsequium potius humilitatis ac pietatis veraciter esse cognoscas'. Translation: J. McClure and R. Collins, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English people* (Oxford, 1999), 343. The new edition of the letter appeared too late to be utilized in this essay: C.W. Grocock and I.N. Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow* (Oxford, 2013), 123–161.

3 Bede died six months and twenty-one days later on 26 May 735: see *Epistola de obitu Bedae* (eds B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors, *BEH*, 580–87) and Plummer's note, *VBOH*, I, lxxiii.

4 Bede does not include it in the catalogue of his writings in *Historia ecclesiastica* (eds B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors, *BEH*), 5.24.

of rhetoric.[5] One thing is certain: had he not written it, or had it perished like so much else from the period, our understanding of things would be substantially altered. For nowhere else did Bede spell out at such length and with such force what he thought about the present of his day and the future which lay ahead, as regards his own native Northumbria. The result is a *Sitz im Leben* for his *oeuvre* – especially the later works – that would otherwise be hard to construct, had Bede in his final months not confided in his former pupil-now-turned-bishop, as the one person he felt could fix the problem.

In the scope of the present volume, Bede's *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* is therefore vital; we must listen attentively for what it can tell us about the future as Bede imagined it. Scholars usually keep the *Epistola* on the periphery, no doubt as a crucial text, but one to be brought in piecemeal, through use of this or that pregnant remark, to elucidate discussion of more central works such as the *Historia ecclesiastica* or the biblical commentaries. Such an approach is necessary, of course, and has been put to good use in the scholarship.[6] In what follows, I should like nonetheless to reverse the procedure. I shall place Bede's letter at the centre of my investigation and consider it as a whole – presumably the way Bede intended it to be experienced. We should not be deceived by the format. Its occasional character, its brevity and hasty clip can mask the high degree of detail Bede has packed into it. With that in mind, my task will be to wring from the *Epistola* all that it has to say about Bede's view of the future as it relates to his vision of reform. I will then turn to some of his more central works to probe their interconnections with his letter.

Ecgberht and the Future

'I urge your Holiness, most beloved Father in Christ, to remember to uphold both by holy living and teaching the most sacred office which the Author of

[5] On the style of the letter, see P. Sims-Williams, *Religion and literature in western England, 600–800* (Cambridge, 1990), 126–33. However, I reject his suggestion that, because the letter's rhetoric can be placed within a tradition of monastic polemic, it should not be taken at face value.

[6] See A.T. Thacker, 'Bede's ideal of reform', in *Ideal and reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon society*, eds P. Wormald, D. Bullough and R. Collins (Oxford, 1983), 130–53; W. Goffart, *The narrators of barbarian history* (Princeton, 1988), 239, 255; S. DeGregorio, '*Nostrorum socordiam temporum*': the reforming impulse of Bede's later exegesis', *Early Medieval Europe*, 11 (2002), 107–22; S. DeGregorio, 'Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam* and the reform of the Northumbrian Church', *Speculum*, 79 (2004), 1–25.

all dignities and the bestower of all spiritual gifts has conferred upon you'.[7] Two things are notable about this sentence, which follows directly upon the opening section of the letter already discussed above. The first is the calculated use of the imperative. The letter deploys this mood as well as the language of command regularly.[8] Bede writes to incite not to inform. He wishes to outline a plan for Ecgberht no doubt, but urging the bishop to implement that plan is his real purpose. Note secondly the microscopic focus on the episcopate, that *gradum sacrosanctum* which, in Bede's fine image, is but God's gift to Ecgberht. As we shall see, there is more to this theme than the execution of Ecgberht's own duties. Larger issues abound, relating to the episcopate and monasteries throughout Northumbria and above all with the metropolitan authority of York. But these concerns surface fully only later in the letter; we shall come to them momentarily.

Bede first attends to the theme of proper episcopal conduct (sections 2–4). Urging Ecgberht to read the Pastoral Epistles and Gregory the Great's *Regula pastoralis*, he underlines the connection between upright behaviour and the duty of teaching that must comprise the bishop's *habitus*. It is a theme common to many of Bede's works, but noteworthy here is the emphasis he places on *future* reward or punishment. The bishop who acts callously will be cast out at the Last Judgement: 'What will happen to him at the hour of the coming of the Lord, the time of which is unknown to him, is made clear in the Gospel, where he says to the useless slave: 'Throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth".[9] It is a bold if not brash scenario for a monk-priest to paint for a ruling bishop. Bede's next move is therefore predictable if not entirely credible:

> I do not say this because I think you would act in any other way, because it is reported of some bishops that they have no man of true learning or self-control around them, but instead are surrounded by those who give themselves up to laughter, jokes, storytelling, eating, drinking, and other seductions of the soft life,

---

[7] *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 1: 'Exhortor itaque tuam, dilectissime in Christo antistes, sanctitatem, ut gradum sacrosanctum quem tibi Auctor graduum et spiritualium largitor charismatum committere dignatus est, sacrosancta et operatione et doctrina confirmare memineris'. Translation: McClure and Collins, *Ecclesiastical History*, 343.

[8] For example: *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 3, 4, 7, 9, 14.

[9] *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 4: '... quid huic ueniente Domino, hora qua non sperat, euenturum sit, euangelica manifeste sententia declarat, qua dicitur ad inutilem seruum: 'Eicite in tenebras exteriores, ibi erit fletus et stridor dentium". Translation: McClure and Collins, *Ecclesiastical History*, 343–4.

> and who would prefer each day to fill their stomachs with feasting rather than their minds with heavenly offerings. If you should meet any of these bishops, I should like you to correct them by your holy authority …[10]

How much of this was aimed at Ecgberht directly? Bede's caveat may be more than it appears, given that he admonished Ecgberht to guard his speech and occupy his mind with reading. Even so, Bede characterises the problem as systematic, encompassing bishops throughout Northumbria, and touching particularly on matters of their conduct. Bishops, in effect, are acting like secular lords, a comparison, we shall see, that is by no means accidental, being integral to one facet of Bede's wider critique.

The next four sections (5–8) move from the description of present demise to the prospect of emended future, as Bede begins to spell out the remedies he thinks should be implemented. This is obviously the crucial dimension of the letter for our purposes, its vision for the future. Bede identifies three major objectives, all of them vital to 'ruling over and caring for the flock of Christ' (*in regendis pascendisque Christi ovibus*).[11] First, because Ecgberht's dioceses are so far apart that it would take him by himself 'more than a whole year' (*etiam anni totius emenso curriculo*) to visit them all, he recommends assistance in the form of a larger priesthood: 'it is clearly essential that you appoint others to help you in your holy work; thus priests should be ordained and teachers established who may preach the word of God and consecrate the holy mysteries in every small village, and above all perform the holy rites of baptism wherever the opportunity arises'.[12] The ordination of *clerici* remained the unique prerogative of the bishop, whose chief responsibility was the care for the laity. On both counts, Bede's comment is revealing: clerical ministration has been short in supply, resulting

---

[10] *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 4: 'Quod non ita loquor, quasi te aliter facere sciam, sed quia de quibusdam episcopis fama vulgatum est, quod ita ipsi Christo serviant, ut nullos secum alicuius religionis aut continentiae viros habeant; sed potius illos, qui risui, iocis, fabulis, commessationibus et ebrietatibus, ceterisque vitae remissioris illecebris subigantur, et qui magis quotidie ventrem dapibus, quam mentem sacrificiis caelestibus parent. Quos tua sancta auctoritate, si alicubi repereris velim corrigas …'. Translation: McClure and Collins, *Ecclesiastical History*, 344–5.

[11] *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 6.

[12] *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 5: 'Et quia latiora sunt spatia locorum, quae ad gubernacula tuae dioecesis pertinent, quam ut solus per omnia discurrere, et in singulis uiculis atque agellis uerbum Dei praedicare, etiam anni totius emenso curriculo, sufficias, necessarium satis est, ut plures tibi sacri operis adiutores adsciscas, presbyteros uidelicet ordinando, atque instituendo doctores, qui in singulis uiculis praedicando Dei uerbo, et consecrandis mysteriis caelestibus, ac maxime peragendis sacri baptismatis officiis, ubi oportunitas ingruerit, insistant'. Translation: McClure and Collins, *Ecclesiastical History*, 345.

in an uninstructed and unbaptised laity. Bede wished rather that all hamlets (*in singulis viculis*) be visited at least once yearly, if not by a bishop then by the priests under his charge. Indeed, Bede envisages these itinerant priests armed with the authority not only to preach but also to say mass and administer baptism. Alan Thacker, commenting on Bede's pastoral theology, has noted the intimate association between a bishop and his priests, who, while clearly under the former's authority, were envisaged no less as indispensable surrogates empowered with a range of sacramental functions.[13]

All this leads naturally to Bede's second expressed objective: better trained clergy. '[I]n this preaching to the populace I consider it most important that you attempt to fix ineradicably in the memory of all those under your rule the beliefs of the Church, as set out in the Apostle's Creed, and also the Lord's Prayer, which a reading of the holy Gospel teaches us'.[14] It is evident from Bede's ensuing comments that achieving this goal was not merely a question of numbers. The intellectual and spiritual training of *clerici* was as much an issue for redress. Knowledge of the Creed and Lord's Prayer, that is of the very rudiments of the faith, was lacking not least due to incompetency in Latin, and so 'the unlearned, that is to say those who only know their own language, must learn to say them in their own tongue and to chant them carefully'.[15] In a well-known remark, Bede explains further that he has fostered this objective himself by offering his own English translations of the Creed and Lord's Prayer.[16] Here we catch a glimpse of the central role of *doctores* in Bede's reforming vision. While not necessarily called to a mission of itinerant preaching themselves, such teachers, of which Bede stands as our pre-eminent example, were to be vital in the training of active clergy, the *praedicatores*.[17] As this section of the letter reveals, Bede had

---

[13] A.T. Thacker, 'Monks, preaching and pastoral care in early Anglo-Saxon England', in *Pastoral care before the parish*, eds J. Blair and R. Sharpe (Leicester, 1992), 137–70, at 152–60.

[14] *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 5: 'In qua uidelicet praedicatione populis exhibenda, hoc prae ceteris omni instantia procurandum arbitror, ut fidem catholicam quae apostolorum symbolo continetur, et Dominicam orationem, quam sancti Evangelii nos Scriptura edocet, omnium qui ad tuum regimen pertinent, memoriae radicitus infigere cures'. Translation: McClure and Collins, *Ecclesiastical History*, 345.

[15] *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 5: 'Et quidem omnes qui Latinam linguam lectionis usu didicerunt, etiam haec optime didicisse certissimum est; sed idiotas, hoc est, eos qui propriae tantum linguae notitiam habent, haec ipsa sua lingua discere, ac sedulo decantare facito'.

[16] *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 5: 'Propter quod et ipse multis saepe sacerdotibus idiotis haec utraque, et symbolum uidelicet, et Dominicam orationem in linguam Anglorum translatam obtuli'. Translation: McClure and Collins, *Ecclesiastical History*, 346.

[17] Thacker, 'Ideal of reform', 130–33 and his later piece 'Monks, preaching and pastoral care', at 152–4; also S. DeGregorio, 'The Venerable Bede on Prayer and Contemplation', *Traditio*, 54

aspirations for a rejuvenated pastorate, a future where 'the whole community of believers' (*coetus omnis fidelium*), as 'a united chorus of suppliants to God' (*chorus omnis Deo supplicantium*),[18] would together work to bring about societal reform at all levels.

Bede's third objective addresses what in his mind is clearly a more insidious problem, evident from the pronounced shift in tone at this juncture in the letter. Hence once again he raises the spectre of eternal punishment, as if to impress all the more upon Ecgberht the immense consequence of the issue.[19] And rightly so, as the issue, namely the receiving of 'temporal dues' (*temporalia*) in exchange for 'the gifts of heavenly support' (*caelestis beneficii dona*), teeters in Bede's mind on the brink of simony. Note what he says (key parts in italics):

> You must appreciate *what a serious crime* is committed by those who most sedulously *demand earthly recompense* from those who listen to them, but at the same time devote no attention to their eternal salvation by way of preaching, moral exhortation, or rebukes. *Be moved by this and weigh it carefully, dearest bishop*. For we have heard, and it is indeed well known, that there are many villages and hamlets of our people located in inaccessible mountains or in dense forests, where a bishop has never been seen over the course of many years performing his ministry and revealing the divine grace. *But not one of these places is immune from paying the taxes [tributis] that are due to that bishop*. Not only does the bishop never appear in such places, to confirm the baptised by the laying-on of his hand, neither do they have any teacher to instruct them in the truth of the faith or enable them to distinguish between good and evil deeds. Thus it may come about that not only do the bishops not evangelise freely and confirm the faithful, but also they do something much worse, which is that *having received money [pecunia] from their congregations, something the Lord forbade*, they neglect the ministry of the word which the Lord offered.[20]

(1999), 1–39, esp. 5–15.

[18] *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 5: 'Sic enim fit, ut coetus omnis fidelium, quomodo fidelis esse, qua se firmitate credendi contra immundorum spirituum certamina munire atque armare debeat, discat; fit, ut chorus omnis Deo supplicantium, quid maxime a diuina clementia quaeri oporteat, agnoscat'. Translation: McClure and Collins, *Ecclesiastical History*, 346.

[19] *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 6: 'Sicut e contrario, si commissum tibi a Domino negotium minus diligenter compleueris, pro retentione talenti cum seruo nequam et pigro partem es recepturus in futuro ...'. Translation: McClure and Collins, *Ecclesiastical History*, 347.

[20] *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 7: 'Attende *quid gravussimi sceleris* illi commiserint, qui et terrena ab auditoribus suis lucra diligentissime requirere, et pro eorum salute aeterna nichil omnino praedicando, uel exhortando, uel increpando, laboris impendere contendunt. *Sollicite atque intentione curiosa, antistes dilectissime, perpende*. Audiuimus enim, et fama est, quia multae uillae

The indictment Bede levels here is, thanks to the detail he provides, easy enough to explain. Evidently villages throughout Northumbria, even the most remote and inaccessible, were rendering taxes – Bede's word is *tributa* – to their bishops in return for pastoral care. Such a practice was likely normal and not in itself the target of Bede's ire.[21] The real key to his exasperation appears to be such payments taking the form of money (*pecunia*), compounded by the clergy's failure to provide service of any kind to their congregations (*auditores*) in return. The deadly implication is that bishops, driven by avarice, care more for amassing wealth than saving souls. Bede does not mince words: this is a 'serious crime' (*quid grauissimi sceleris*), far more than the laughter, jokes, storytelling and the other vices he listed previously.[22] His initial curt appeal to Ecgberht – 'Be moved by this and weigh it carefully, dearest bishop' – is given greater point in the section that ensues, now in the form of a rhetorical question: 'On whom does this denial of the good reflect than on those bishops who have promised to be their protectors, but who have neglected or have proved unwilling to perform this duty of spiritual leadership?'[23]

In the next two sections of the letter (9–10), Bede now attacks the problem from a different angle. He begins by reminding Ecgberht that any work of reform needn't be undertaken single-handedly, since a 'most active helper' (*promptissimum ... adiutorem*) may be found in none other than Ceolwulf, both the king and, so it happens, his cousin: 'From his own love of religion he will be constantly and determinedly anxious to help with anything that relates to the rule of piety, and above all, as you are his dearest and closest relative, he will be keen to assist any good works that you initiate'.[24] Immediately upon suggesting

---

ac uiculi nostrae gentis in montibus sint inaccessis ac saltibus dumosis positi, ubi nunquam multis transeuntibus annis sit uisus antistes, qui ibidem aliquid ministerii aut gratiae caelestis exhibuerit; quorum tamen ne unus quidem *a tributis antistiti reddendis* esse possit immunis: nec solum talibus locis desit antistes qui manus impositione baptizatos confirmet, uerum etiam omnis doctor qui eos uel fidei ueritatem uel discretionem bonae ac malae actionis edoceat, absit. Sicque fit, ut episcoporum quidam non solum gratis non euangelizent, uel manus fidelibus imponant; uerum etiam, quod grauius est, *accepta ab auditoribus suis pecunia*, quam Dominus prohibuit, opus uerbi quod Dominus iussit exercere contemnant'. Translation: McClure and Collins, *Ecclesiastical History*, 347.

[21] J. Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon society* (Oxford, 2005), 155.

[22] See above, n. 10.

[23] *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 8: 'Cuius nimirum privatio boni ad quos amplius quam ad ipsos respicit antistites, qui illorum se promittunt esse praesules, quibus spiritualis officium praesulatus exhibere aut negligunt, aut nequeunt?'. Translation: McClure and Collins, *Ecclesiastical History*, 348.

[24] *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 9: '... qui et pro insita sibi dilectione religionis, quicquid ad regulam pietatis pertinet, firma protinus intentione adiuvare curabit, et maxime illa, quae tu, cum

this alliance, Bede moves to what is arguably the letter's ultimate desideratum, namely the establishment of a metropolitan see at York. Prior to 731, only four Northumbrian sees had been established: at York, Lindisfarne, Hexham and Whithorn.[25] Over a century earlier, near the start of the conversion, Pope Gregory the Great communicated to Augustine a different vision for the episcopal structure of the North: a metropolitan see at York, alongside twelve suffragan sees, to mirror the same arrangement in the south.[26] While such a diocesan arrangement rapidly materialised in the southern province, though centred at Canterbury rather than London as Gregory wished, the northern province, with its mere four sees and no metropolitan, did not follow suit, despite Pope Honorius's issuing the pallium to bishop Paulinus of York a full century earlier, in 634.[27] In a key passage, Bede frames the matter this way:

> For who cannot see how much better it would be for the enormous weight of ecclesiastical government to be divided up amongst many, who could easily take their share, than for one to be oppressed by a load which he cannot carry? For the holy pope Gregory, in the letter that he sent to the blessed archbishop Augustine about the future in the preservation in Christ of the faith of our people, ordered that twelve bishops should be ordained, after all had been converted. Over these the bishop of York, receiving the pallium from the apostolic see, would be the metropolitan. I should like you, holy father, under the protection and guidance of the previously mentioned most pious and God-beloved king, most assiduously to seek to bring about the achieving of that number of bishops, so that by an

---

sis propinquus illius amantissimus, bona coeperis, ipse ut perficiantur opitulabitur'. Translation: McClure and Collins, *Ecclesiastical History*, 348.

[25] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.23: 'At uero prouinciæ Northanhumbrorum, cui rex Ceoluulf præest, quatuor nunc episcopi præsulatum tenent; Uilfridus in Eburacensi ecclesia, Etdiluald in Lindisfaronensi, Acca in Hagustaldensiecclesia, Pecthelm in ea quæ Candida Casa uocatur, quae nuper multiplicatis fidelium plebibus in sedem pontificatus addita ipsum primum habet antistitem'.

[26] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 1.29: 'Ad Eburacam uero ciuitatem te uolumus episcopum mittere, quem ipse judicaveris ordinare, ita dumtaxat ut, si eadem ciuitas cum finitimis locis uerbum Dei receperit, ipse quoque XII episcopos ordinet, et metropolitani honore perfruatur; quia ei quoque, si uita comes fuerit, pallium tribuere, Domino fauente, disponimus ...'.

[27] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 2.17: 'Quo tempore præsulatum sedis apostolicæ Honorius, Bonifacii successor, habebat, qui, ubi gentem Northanhumbrorum cum suo rege ad fidem confessionemque Christi, Paulino evangelizante, conversam esse didicit, misit eidem Paulino pallium ...'.

> abundance of office-holders the church of Christ may be more perfectly governed in all matters that relate to the practice of holy religion.[28]

For all its measure, it is a devastating critique. Kirby's assessment is apt: 'At no stage in its development since 634 can the Northumbrian Church have commended itself to Bede as properly constituted in accordance with the original Gregorian scheme; and once Pope Gregory's intention was known to him, as it was by 725 at the latest, Bede must have been profoundly dissatisfied with the failure of the church in Northumbria to evolve in a satisfactory manner'.[29] That dissatisfaction is indeed a key to understanding much else that Bede wrote prior to the letter, as we shall see. The essential point for now, as regards Bede's vision of the future, is the high importance he attached to the immediate completion of Gregory's plan, as one sure step Ecgberht should take toward improving pastoral administration.

But Bede is not done. In the four sections that follow (10–13) we encounter his boldest directive to Ecgberht: the redeployment of monastic assets as an expeditious step in actualising the Gregorian plan. Specifically, Bede proposes that, should land shortage hamper the creation of new sees, a ready solution lay at hand: Ecgberht should locate those sees in already established monasteries whose laxness, as Bede sees it, nullifies their right to exist anyway. Bede does not withhold his contempt for these pseudo-minsters:

> Such places which are in the common phrase 'useless to God and man', because they neither serve God by following a regular monastic life nor provide soldiers and helpers for the secular powers who might defend our people from the

[28] *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 9: 'Quod non alio magis ut mihi videtur potest ordine perfici, quam si plures nostrae genti consecrentur antistites, exemplumque sequamini legislatoris, qui cum solus iurgia ac pondus Israeliticae plebis sustinere non posset, elegit sibi divino adiutus consilio, et consecravit septuaginta seniores, quorum ope atque consilio impositum sibi onus ferre levius posset. Quis enim non videat, quanto sit melius tam enorme pondus ecclesiastici regiminis in plures, qui hoc dispertitum facilius ferant, dividi, quam unum sub fasce quem portare non possit opprimi. Nam et sanctus papa Gregorius, cum de fide nostrae gentis quae adhuc futura et conservata erat in Christo ad beatissimum archiepiscopum Augustinum missis litteris disputaret, duodecim in ea episcopos, postquam ad fidem venirent, ordinandos esse decrevit; in quibus Eboracensis antistes, accepto a sede apostolica pallio, metropolitanus esse deberet. Quem profecto numerum episcoporum velim modo tua sancta paternitas, patrocinante praesidio piissimi ac Deo dilecti regis praefati, sollerter implere contendat, quatinus abundante numero magistrorum perfectius ecclesia Christi in his quae ad cultum sacrae religionis pertinent, instituatur'. Translation: McClure and Collins, *Ecclesiastical History*, 349.

[29] D.P. Kirby, *Bede's Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum: Its contemporary setting* (Jarrow Lecture, 1992), 12; see also J. Story, 'Bede, Willibrord and the letters of Pope Honorius I on the genesis of the archbishopric of York', *English Historical Review*, 127 (2012), 783–818.

> barbarians, are both numerous and large; so whoever establishes episcopal sees in them because of the needs of the times will be judged not to have committed the crime of betraying the divine law but rather to have carried out an act of virtue. For how can it be thought sinful if the illegal decisions of some princes are corrected by the just judgment of better ones, or if the lying pen of evil scribes is destroyed and made as nothing by the discreet sentence of wiser priests ...[30]

As Catherine Cubitt reminds us, 'Bede's comments here have a specific context ... These are different criticisms from those levelled by him against worldly and wealthy houses like Coldingham'.[31] What he is decrying is the secular subversion of monasticism, above all in cases where thegns, receiving grants of land from kings 'under the pretext of building monasteries' (*sub praetextu monasteriorum construendorum*), establish permanently-tenured households for their kindred instead.[32] Bede, as he indicates, considered such a practice doubly corrupting. Not only were monastic standards being compromised at the hands of non-professionals, but land assets essential to the maintenance and protection of the kingdom were being squandered.[33] Such, Bede says, has been the practice for decades, since King Aldfrith's death in 705, so that 'every one of the leading nobles has built himself a monastery of this kind during his time in office and involved his wife in the same wicked offence'.[34] Following the precedent of the righteous rulers of ancient Judah, Ecgberht and Ceolwulf must act with

---

[30] *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 11: 'Et quia huiusmodi maxima et plurima sunt loca, quae, ut uulgo dici solet, neque Deo neque hominibus utilia sunt, quia uidelicet neque regularis secundum Deum ibidem uita servatur, neque illa milites siue comites secularium potestatum qui gentem nostram a barbaris defendant possident: si quis in eisdem ipsis locis pro necessitate temporum sedem episcopatus constituat, non culpam praevaricationis incurrere, sed opus uirtutis magis agere probabitur. Quomodo enim in peccatum reputari potest, si iniusta principum iudicia recto meliorum principum examine corrigantur; ac mendax stilus scribarum iniquorum discreta prudentium sacerdotum sententia deleatur ac redigatur in nihilum ...'. Translation: McClure and Collins, *Ecclesiastical History*, 350.

[31] C. Cubitt, 'The clergy in early Anglo-Saxon England', *Historical Research*, 78 (2005), 273–87, at 285.

[32] *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 11: 'At alii graviore adhuc flagitio, cum sint ipsi laici et nullo vitae regularis vel usu exerciti, vel amore praediti, data regibus pecunia, emunt sibi sub praetextu monasteriorum construendorum territoria in quibus suae liberius vacent libidini ...'

[33] For further discussion, see Blair, *Church in Anglo-Saxon society*, 100–105; S. Foot, *Monastic life in Anglo-Saxon England c. 600–900* (Cambridge, 2006), 128–30.

[34] *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 13: 'Sic per annos circiter triginta, hoc est, ex quo Aldfrid rex humanis rebus ablatus est, provincia nostra vesano illo errore dementata est, ut nullus pene exinde praefectorum extiterit qui non huiusmodi sibi monasterium in diebus suae praefecturae comparaverit, suamque simul coniugem pari reatu nocivi mercatus astrinxerit'.

indignation by tearing up the charters that have been granted to such corrupt sites, 'lest in our times either religion come to an end … or with the diminishing of our military forces those who should defend our borders against barbarian incursions disappear'.[35]

Bede closes the letter by urging Ecgberht to 'strive to bring your holy and virtuous undertaking firmly to its end', and warning him of 'some who are very opposed to what I have been advising' as well as of the ghastly fates of Balaam, Achan, Judas and others in the Bible who perished from avarice.[36] 'If we were to deal with drunkenness, gluttony, extravagance and other such plagues with equal attention, the length of this letter would have to be enormously extended'.[37] It is a dire concluding note, though one aptly suited to the tenor of the whole. And yet, for all its rhetorical power, the success of its immediate effects remains deeply in question. After Bede died, York attained metropolitan status, with Ecgberht receiving the pallium in 735.[38] But under its new archbishop no new bishoprics were created and the northern province failed to achieve its Gregorian apogee. Perhaps Ecgberht did more to address the pseudo-minster problem, if indeed Bedan traces are to be discovered in his *Dialogus*, or in a papal letter asking Ecgberht's brother King Eadberht of Northumbria to restore three monasteries to Abbot Forthred.[39] There is also the partisan testimony of Alcuin, for whom the age of Ecgberht and Eadberht 'were fortunate times in Northumbria, / ruled over in harmony by king and bishop: / the one ruling the

---

[35] *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 11: 'Quo exemplo, tuam quoque sanctitatem decet cum religioso rege nostrae gentis, irreligiosa, et iniqua priorum gesta atque scripta convellere, et ea quae provinciae nostrae, sive secundum Deum, sive secundum seculum sint utilia, prospicere: ne nostris temporibus vel religione cessante, amor timorque interni deseratur inspectoris, vel rarescente copia militiae secularis, absint qui fines nostros a barbarica incursione tueantur'. Translation: McClure and Collins, *Ecclesiastical History*, 350.

[36] *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 16: '… ad firmum usque finem perducere contenda. Scio namque nonnullos huic nostrae exhortationi multum contradicturos …'. Translation: McClure and Collins, *Ecclesiastical History*, 354. The biblical exempla recur through this section and the next.

[37] *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 17: 'Ceterum si de ebrietate, commessatione, luxuria, et ceteris huiusmodi contagionibus pari ratione tractare voluerimus, epistolae modus in immensum extenderetur'. Translation: McClure and Collins, *Ecclesiastical History*, 357.

[38] The continuations to the *Historia ecclesiastica* (eds B. Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors, *BEH*, 572–7) record Ecgberht's accession to the bishopric in the same breath with Bede's passing: 'Anno ab incarnatione Domini DCCXXXV Nothelm archiepiscopus ordinatur, et Ecgberht episcopus, accepto ab apostolica sede pallio, primus post Paulinum in archiepiscopatum confirmatus est ordinauitque Fridubertum et Friduualdum episcopos; et Baeda presbyter obiit'.

[39] A.W. Haddan and W. Stubbs (eds), *Councils and ecclesiastical documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland* (3 vols, Oxford, 1869–78), vol. III, 403–13 (*Dialogus*) and 394–6 (letter of Pope Paul I to Ecgberht and Eadberht).

church, the other the business of the realm'.[40] All the same, that clearer signs of Bede's influence are to be found elsewhere in the eighth century, in the reforming canons of the Southumbrian Church at Clofesho, or even in the tenth century with Benedictine reformers such as Æthelwold, is not that much debated.[41] But the purpose of this chapter is to assess not how well Bede's reforming ideals were put into practice[42] but how thoroughly they permeated his later writings in general. To that task we now turn.

The Reforming Impulse of the *Historia ecclesiastica*

The programmatic character of the reform agenda of the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* naturally raises questions, of which the most pressing are these: did Bede come to such concerns only at life's end, revealing them first and for all to a close associate in November of 734? Or is his letter a concentrated expression of ideas and ideals voiced elsewhere in his writings? Put another way, was reform an abiding preoccupation of his later career, or a mere deathbed fixation, taken up *in extremis* and therefore only too late?

The topic of reform had little traction in early Bede scholarship. And the bits one finds hardly envision a pro-reformist Bede. R.W. Chambers, in his 1936 British Academy Lecture, noted Bede's concern with the 'general decline of Northumbrian civilisation', but was of the opinion that 'It was not till the last year of his life that Bede spoke out'.[43] Bede, so it appears, came to the matter of reform late, confining his views to his letter. Thompson's *Bede, his life, times,*

[40] Alcuin, *Versus de patribus regibus et sanctis Euboricensis ecclesiae* (ed. P. Godman, *The Bishops, Kings and Saints of York*), lines 1277–9: 'Tempora tunc huius fuerant felicia gentis, / quam rex et praesul concordi iure regebant: hic iura ecclesiae, rex ille negotia regni'.

[41] Thacker, 'Ideal of reform', 149–53 and 'Monks, preaching and pastoral care', 165; Blair, *Church in Anglo-Saxon society*, 111–15; C. Cubitt, 'Pastoral care and conciliar canons: the provisions of the 747 Council of Clofesho', in *Pastoral care before the parish*, eds J. Blair and R. Sharpe (Leicester, 1992), 193–211, at 198–205; and S. Coates, 'The bishop as benefactor and civic patron: Alcuin, York, and episcopal authority in Anglo-Saxon England', *Speculum*, 71 (1996), 529–58, at 531–2. On the tenth century, see: Foot, *Monastic life in Anglo-Saxon England*, 14–19; P. Wormald, 'Æthelwold and his continental counterparts: contact, comparison, contrast', in *Bishop Æthelwold: his career and influence*, ed. B. Yorke (Woodbridge, 1988), 13–42, at 39–42.

[42] One still useful assessment is: D.J.V. Fisher, 'The Church in England between the death of Bede and the Danish invasions', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 2 (1952), 1–19.

[43] R.W. Chambers, 'Bede', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 22 (1936), 129–56, at 145.

and writings, published around the same time and otherwise full of insightful contributions, offers tellingly little to suggest alternative understandings.[44]

The work of James Campbell was better; he stressed the idea that the *Historia ecclesiastica* contained 'a gallery of good examples', stipulating that Aidan and other saints ought to be read 'not simply as good examples but good examples in strong contrast to the conduct of the Church in his day'.[45] But it was not until 1983 that such a view was fully articulated. In his seminal article 'Bede's ideal of reform', Alan Thacker argued that a concern for reform is 'a key to the understanding of all Bede's later works, not only the commentaries and homilies, but the hagiography and histories as well'.[46] His own demonstration concentrated on Bede's prose *Vita Cuthberti*, composed around 720, which he showed had been carefully shaped, in response to the anonymous Lindisfarne life of the saint, to accord with its author's reformist principles: 'Cuthbert is presented as an exemplary monk, ascetic, and bishop ... the very type of the pastor Bede was to recommend to Ecgberht some fifteen years later'.[47] On this reading, Bede wrote with a deliberate agenda in view, keyed to present crises in his own social setting which he not only knew but sought to change. Today, as scholars continue to develop Thacker's insights, there is wide consensus that Bede, especially from 720 onward, was a heavily reform-minded writer.

Let us first look, then, at Bede's major work of that period, the *Historia ecclesiastica*, and say something about its reformist make-up before turning to the biblical commentaries. In light of the amount of work that has been done on its social and political contexts,[48] it is something of a surprise to find Nicholas Higham, in his recent monograph on the *Historia ecclesiastica*, contending 'that there is comparatively little which is explicitly and actively reformist in the *EH*, as regards the Church at least'. He continues: 'There are, for example, very few complaints regarding secular or corrupt monasteries such as one finds in the *Letter to Egbert*, and no expression of dissatisfaction at the small number of

[44] A.H. Thompson (ed.), *Bede, his life, times, and writings* (Oxford, 1935). It is interesting to note that the topic of reform did not factor either in two later volumes, G. Bonner (ed.), *Famulus Christi* (London, 1976), and L.A.J.R. Houwen and A.A. MacDonald (eds), *Beda Venerabilis: historian, monk and Northumbrian* (Groningen, 1996). By contrast, the theme is central in more recent studies: see S. DeGregorio (ed.), *Innovation and tradition in the writings of the Venerable Bede* (Morgantown, WV, 2006).

[45] J. Campbell, 'Bede', in *Latin historians*, ed. T.A. Dorey (London, 1966), 159–90.

[46] Thacker, 'Ideal of reform', 130.

[47] *Ibid.*, 142, 139.

[48] Kirby, 'Contemporary setting'; and Goffart, *narrators of barbarian history*, as well as his 'The *Historia ecclesiastica*: Bede's agenda and ours', *The Haskins Society Journal*, 2 (1990), 29–45 and 'Bede's History in a harsher climate', in *Innovation and tradition*, ed. DeGregorio, 203–326.

Northumbrian dioceses'.[49] What Higham misses here is the obvious differences in genre and audience between the *Historia ecclesiastica* and the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*. Such differences, of course, would necessitate shifts in approach as well. After all, should we expect a work of ecclesiastical historiography – *a fortiori* one addressed *Gloriosissimo regi Ceoluufo*, and most determined to edify the *auditor sollicitus*[50] – to unleash the same frontal assault divulged in a personal communication, or to address each complaint voiced therein one-by-one? Again Campbell gets it right: Bede's restraint was deliberate, 'an expression of his usual discretion', and yet the fact nevertheless remains that 'much of the *Ecclesiastical History* is by implication a criticism of the Church in Bede's day'.[51] That it does not give heated vent to the contemporary concerns of the letter should not force us to dissociate the *Historia ecclesiastica* in any way from Bede's reform programme, or keep us from relating it to his other works. But it should prompt us to change what to look for.

A glance at Book 4 is instructive here, given that it has much to say about monasticism.[52] The preceding book already informs us, in its treatment of Aidan, that the Irish monk-bishop's life '... was in great contrast to our modern slothfulness',[53] while Book 5, sounding an even dire note whose resonance with the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* simply cannot be denied, mentions those who 'prefer to take up monastic vows rather than train themselves in the art of war. What the result will be, a later generation will discover'.[54] These are very clear signs that contemporary concerns are on Bede's mind. Nevertheless, scholars are often thrown off the scent when, arriving at Book 4, their interests turn to Cædmon,

---

[49] N.J. Higham, *(Re-)reading Bede: the Ecclesiastical History in context* (London, 2006), 56.

[50] For the dedication to King Ceolwulf, and Bede's stated didactic aims, see *Historia ecclesiastica*, preface.

[51] Campbell, 'Bede', 176. Campbell continues: 'While his commentaries contain numerous references to the shortcomings of the Church and in his letter to Egbert he is open and violent in denunciation he has very little to say directly about the sins of the clergy in his history ... Had we to rely on the *Ecclesiastical History* for our knowledge of the Church in the first generation of the eighth century we should know little of it, and still less of Bede's severe judgment on it' (176–7).

[52] For more extensive treatment of what follows, see: S. DeGregorio, 'Monasticism and reform in Book IV of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 61 (2010), 673–87.

[53] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 3.5: 'In tantum autem uita illius a nostri temporis segnitia distabat'.

[54] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.23: 'Qua adridente pace ac serenitate temprum, plures in gente Nordanhymbrorum, tam nobiles quam priuati, se suosque liberos depositis armis satagunt magis, accepta tonsura, monasterialibus adscribere utois quam bellicis exercere studiis. Quae res quam sit habitura finem, posterior aestas uidebat'. Translation: Colgrave and Mynors, *BEH*, 561.

oral formulaic theory and Old English prosody. This is ironic, given the reform-laden implications of this famous episode and much else in Book 4.

As early as Chapter 2, for instance, we get this detail about Theodore's habits of pastoral visitation, how he 'journeyed to every district, consecrating bishops in suitable places and, with their help, correcting whatever he found imperfect'.[55] It is nothing if not a pointed contrast to those delinquent bishops in the letter who eschew visiting their flocks yet still collect incomes. Or take the figure of Owine, a monk at Chad's monastery at Lastingham, whom we meet in Chapter 3. Bede makes a point of noting that he had once been a thegn in the service of Queen Æthelthryth, before describing the terms of his conversion to monastic life:

> As his faith and zeal increased, he decided to renounce the world and this he did *in no half-hearted way*: he stripped himself so completely of his worldly possessions that he left all that he had and, dressed only in a plain garment and carrying an axe and an adze in his hands, he came to the most reverend father's monastery at Lastingham. *He did this to show that he was not entering the monastery for the sake of some ease, as some did*; for as he was less capable of the study of the Scriptures, he applied himself more earnestly to manual labour.[56]

Here we have a counter-portrait to those laymen in the letter whom Bede condemns for using the monastic life as a ruse for worldly satisfactions. Indeed, the language Bede employs – 'in no half-hearted way' (*non hoc segniter fecit*), and 'as some did' (*ut quidam*) – strikes a topical chord that echoes the letter's critique. Add to this the subsequent stories of Colman instituting a rule at Mayo to ensure the *stabilitas* of his monks;[57] of Eorcenwald founding monasteries at Chertsey and Barking and establishing 'an excellent form of monastic Rule and discipline in both';[58] of Abbess Hildelith's presiding over Barking until old age

[55] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.2: 'Itaque Theodorus perlustrans uniuersa ordinabat locis oportunis episcopos, et ea quae minus perfecta repperit his quoque iuuantibus corrigebat'. Translation: Colgrave and Mynors, *BEH*, 335.

[56] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.3: 'Qui cum crescente fidei feruore saeculo abrenuntiare disponeret, *non hoc segniter fecit*, sed adeo se mundi rebus exuit, ut relictis omnibus quae habebat, simplici tantum habitu indutus et securim atque asciam in manu ferens, ueniret ad monasterium eiusdem reuerentissimi patris, quod uocatur Laestingaeu. *Non enim otium, ut quidam, sed ad laborem se monasterium intrare signabat.* Quod ipsum etiam facto monstrauit, nam quo minus sufficiebat meditationi scripturarum, eo amplius operi manuum studium inpendebat'. Translation: Colgrave and Mynors, *BEH*, 339; italics mine.

[57] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.4.

[58] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.6: 'Hic sane, priusquam episcopus factus esset, duo praeclara monasteria, unum sibi alterum sorori suae Aedilburgae construxerat, quod utrumque regularibus

yet remaining 'most energetic in the observance of the discipline of the Rule',[59] to name but a few examples, and it is not hard to see that these portraits too are not merely idealisations of the past but models much in need of future emulation.

Against such a background, the Cædmon story in Chapter 24 ought to be viewed as of a piece with the foregoing, not as a digression on poetry. After all, the story *is* about the making of an exemplary Christian monk. Bede tells us that much directly: 'He was a most religious man, humbly submitting himself to the discipline of the Rule; and he opposed all those who wished to act otherwise with a flaming and fervent zeal'.[60] Taken in isolation, the edge of this remark could be missed. But given the monastic underpinnings of Book 4, as well as the heavily topical comments noted in Books 3 and 5 that frame it, not to mention the testimony of the letter, such mention of fervent commitment to monastic discipline must be taken as more than mere description.

Indeed, certain other details in the story carry an equivalent polemical thrust. Take Cædmon's social status. We first meet him as *frater quidam*, one of the monks of the Whitby community. But that of course is to anticipate what he later becomes. Prior to that transformation of social identity, he was but a *rusticus*, a peasant.[61] The real transformation in the story then is not from layman to monk but from unlettered peasant to erudite monastic doctor, the very kind that Bede promoted so fervently elsewhere in his writings. Hence Cædmon is both a contemplative exegete, ruminating on scripture 'like some clean animal chewing the cud' (*quasi mundum animal ruminando*), and a vernacular preacher whose words are able 'to turn his hearers away from delight in sin and arouse in them the love and practice of good works'.[62] Bede even observes that Cædmon's

disciplinis optime instituerat'.

[59] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.9: 'quae [Torhtgyth] multis iam annis in eodem monasterio commorataet ipsa semper in omni humilitate ac sinceritate Deo seruire sategebat, et adiutrix disciplinae regularis eidem matri existere minores docendo uel castigando curabat'.

[60] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.24: 'Erat enim uir multum religiosus et regularibus disciplinis humiliter subditus; aduersum uero illos, qui aliter facere uolebant, zelo magni feruoris accensus, unde et pulchro uitam suam fine conclusit'. Translation: Colgrave and Mynors, *BEH*, 419.

[61] I have noted elsewhere that Cædmon is the only named person of such stature in the *Historia ecclesiastica*: S. DeGregorio, 'Literary contexts: Cædmon's Hymn as a center of Bede's World', in *Cædmon's Hymn and material culture in the world of Bede*, eds A.J. Frantzen and J. Hines (Morgantown, WV, 2008), 51–79, at 77.

[62] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.24: 'At ipse cuncta, quae audiendo discere poterat, rememorando secum et quasi mundum animal ruminando, in carmen dulcissimum conuertebat, suauiusque resonando doctores suos uicissim auditores sui faciebat ... 'Sed et alia perplura de beneficiis et iudiciis diuninis, in quibus cunctis homines ab amore scelerum abstrahere, ad dilectionem uero et sollertiam bonae actionis excitare curabat'. Translation: Colgrave and Mynors, *BEH*, 419.

'teachers (*doctoribus*) became his audience', a comment that both underscores the specific nature of the herdsman's newly elevated social role and, perhaps also, the importance of instruction in the vernacular. Indeed one wonders, given that the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum* appears to signal the need for an English clergy that functions more in the vernacular, whether the Cædmon story in this respect can be said to dovetail with the letter as well. What is this peasant-turned-monastic doctor and vernacular preacher, then, if not a finger in the eye of those secular Northumbrian aristocrats whom Bede felt were destroying Northumbrian monastic life and betraying its pastoral mission? And when we finish the story, only to read in the very next chapter about the destruction of the monastery of Coldingham, that it 'was burned down through carelessness ... because of the wickedness of those who dwelt there and especially of those who were supposed to be its leaders',[63] how else should we take this if not as a calculated juxtaposition, between Whitby with its *doctor rusticus* and Coldingham with its idle aristocrats, designed to contrast monastic laxity with its antidote? So read, the connection to Bede's letter, and to his agenda for reform, is not only evident but forceful and effective.

Reform and the Future in the Later Commentaries

I have argued elsewhere that much of the exegesis produced after 720 is shot through with the same reforming agenda as the hagiographic and historical writings composed during this period.[64] Some caution is needed here, as dating the commentaries is an elusive affair. But even so there is some consensus about which commentaries belong to the decade of the 720s.[65] For our purposes the key texts are those on the Jewish sanctuaries, *De tabernaculo*, *De templo* and *In Ezram et Neemiam*. I believe they were written to form a coherent whole, something like a trilogy; and further that they were intended as an exegetical counterpart to the *Historia ecclesiastica*, devoted like the latter to the theme of

[63] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 4.25: 'His temporibus monasterium uirginum, quod Coludi Vrbem cognominant, cuius et supra meminimus, per culpam incuriae flammis absumtum est. Quod tamen a malitia inhabitantium in eo, et praecipue illorum qui maiores esse uidebantur, contigisse omnes qui nouere facillime potuerunt aduertere'. Translation: Colgrave and Mynors, *BEH*, 421.

[64] DeGregorio, 'Reforming impulse'.

[65] The one exception to the consensus is Paul Meyvaert, who would date *In Ezram* to 715; see: P. Meyvaert, 'The date of Bede's *In Ezram* and his image of Ezra in the *Codex Amiatinus*', *Speculum*, 80 (2005), 1087–133, and my rebuttal of his argument in the introduction to my translation of the work, *Bede: On Ezra and Nehemiah* (Liverpool, 2006), xxxvii–xlii.

aedificatio ecclesiae.[66] But before coming to that let me say something about the earlier commentaries.

I do not wish to restrict a concern for reform solely to Bede's post-720 output; the argument is rather that the prominence of the theme multiplies from that point onward, not that it is absent before then. Indeed, even his earliest exegetical works contain signs of Bede's uneasiness with his own times. His very first commentary, *Expositio Apocalypseos*, composed *c*. 703, complains about 'the sloth of our race (that is, the English), who not long ago, in fact in the time of Pope Gregory the blessed, received the seed of faith, and has cultivated it rather lukewarmly, as far as reading is concerned'.[67] In his *In Regum librum XXX quaestiones*, composed *c.* 715 in reply to questions sent to him by the London priest Nothhelm,[68] Bede turns from his discussion of 2 Kings 24.14, on Nebuchadnezzar's capture of Jerusalem, to make this plucky remark: 'Because the allegory of so lamentable a history fits so well with the negligence of our own time, it must not – I believe – be passed over in silence'.[69] Resuming his exegesis, he equates Nebuchadnezzar's capture of Jerusalem's leaders with worldly temptations overcoming 'even the people's teachers ... and so, they either defile themselves with wicked deeds or, by turning towards heresy, incur the open mark of apostasy'.[70] Dissatisfaction with the clergy also pervades his

---

[66] See S. DeGregorio, 'Bede and the Old Testament', in *The Cambridge companion to Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Cambridge, 2010), 127–41, at 135–9. H. Mayr-Harting proposed such a view in an appendix to his *The Venerable Bede, the Rule of St. Benedict, and social class* (Jarrow Lecture, 1976), 19–22, but in doing so focuses only on *De templo* and its relation to the *Historia ecclesiastica.*

[67] *Expositio Apocalypseos* (ed. R. Gryson, CCSL 121A), preface, lines 140–45: 'Nostrae siquidem, id est, Anglorum, gentis inertiae consulendum ratus, quae et non dudum, id est, temporibus beati Gregorii papae, semen accepit fidei, et idem quantum ad lectionem tepide satis excoluit, non solum dilucidare sensus, verum sententias quoque stringere, disposui'. On the date of the work, see F. Wallis, *Bede: Commentary on Revelation* (Liverpool, 2013), 39–51.

[68] P. Meyvaert, ''In the footsteps of the Fathers': the date of Bede's *Thirty questions on the Book of Kings* to Nothelm', in *The limits of Ancient Christianity*, eds W.E. Klingshirn and M. Vessey (Ann Arbor, MI, 1997), 267–86.

[69] *In Regum librum XXX quaestiones* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119, 293–322), 30, lines 15–17: 'Cuius tam deflendae historiae quia multum neglegentiae nostri temporis congruit non opinior allegoriam esse recitendam'. Translation: W.T. Foley, *Bede: A biblical miscellany* (Liverpool, 1999), 136–7.

[70] *In Regum librum XXX quaestiones*, 30, lines 25–31: 'Abducit autem Nabuchodonosor Hierusalem et uniuersos principes fortes que exercitus decem milia in captiuitatem cum etiam magistros populorum et eos qui inuincibili animo domino seruire ac decalogum legis fideliter uidebantur in Dei ac proximi amore conseruare subito siue illecebris mundi seu aduersitatibus

work on First Samuel, probably completed in early 717.[71] In fact, we now find Bede taking up the theme with greater frequency, a sign that the reform-related issues are beginning to weigh heavier on his mind. And the criticisms sound even more like those of the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*. In one striking passage, he complains of the 'indolence of negligent teachers' (*desidia neglegtium doctorum*) who, being so poorly instructed in their knowledge of the faith, have to be set straight by their superiors.[72] If it is indeed the case that *In primam partem Samuhelis* was completed in the run-up to the 720s, as it seems reasonable to believe, then perhaps we can see why Bede's writings from that decade were to be that much more engaged with issues of reform.

Just how engaged they would become is best seen, I think, from the exegetical trilogy *De tabernaculo*, *De templo* and *In Ezram et Neemiam*, especially if, as noted, these three works are taken as a whole and placed alongside the *Historia ecclesiastica*. The thematic interrelations of the three are quite evident. I believe they possess an internal coherence that presupposes the order *De tabernaculo*, *De templo*, *In Ezram*. The primary scheme unfolded in *De tabernaculo* and *De templo* concerns the formation of the Church as an earthly and heavenly reality. And so for Bede these structures are inter alia symbols of our initial conversion to the faith through the sacrament of baptism. The story told in Ezra-Nehemiah, by contrast, chronicles a later phase of Israelite history, centred on the events following the Temple's destruction by the Babylonians in 586 BCE and its later reconstruction in 515 BCE. As Bede was quick to see, the focus here was less on the Temple as a building and more on the Israelites as a *gens* who, having fallen into captivity (i.e. sin), are then reformed through penance by their spiritual leader Ezra. If *De tabernaculo* and *De templo* are about the initial stages of conversion, then *In Ezram* explores this spiritual condition of sin and redemption, the three

subacti aut maioribus se facinoribus polluunt aut certe in heresim declinando apertae apostasiae notam incidunt'. Translation: Foley, *Biblical miscellany*, 136–7.

[71] On the date of the work, see Meyvaert, 'Date of Bede's *Thirty questions*', 269–75; and more recently P.N. Darby, *Bede and the end of time* (Farnham, 2012), 165–85.

[72] *In primam partem Samuhelis* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119, 5–287), 2, lines 2281–94: 'Cognita perfecti quique rectores desidia neglegentium doctorum quod peccent domino baptizantes eos quos a carnali contagione necdum plena fidei institutione purgarint continuo tales praeuaricationis reos arguunt et catholica auctoritate uitae caelestis regulam palam proponi iubent magistrisque inertibus quos uulgaris eatenus imperitia uexarat imperari ut adductis usque ad eam quam ipsi a patribus didicerant uitae formulam cunctis quos imbuendos susceperint super firmissimum catholicae perfectionis exemplar eos cathecizando a pristina conuersatione paternae traditionis occidant et baptizando ecclesiae membris incorporent neque ultra peccent domino fidei et uitae caelestis ignaros unitati sui corporis, hoc est ecclesiae Christi, nectentes'. *Cf. In primam partem Samuhelis*, lines 1851–9, 1860–67 and 2255–60.

works together rendering vivid successive stages of spiritual development in the Christian life.

Now the relation of all this to the *Historia ecclesiastica* is indeed arresting: on a narrative level, both the Temple trilogy and the *Historia* recount journeys by a chosen *gens* to lands of promise where they are to build up the house of God; both tie the success of the ventures to the patronage of righteous kings; both describe the troubles posed not only by the local inhabitants (i.e. the Samaritans and the British) but by the elect's own sinfulness; and both emphasise the key role played not only by divine grace but by the hard work of teachers dedicated to spreading the faith and fending off heresy. While significant themselves as testaments to Bede's literary artistry, such parallels are even more significant for understanding his reform agenda. They show definitively that he was much preoccupied to use exegesis and historical exposition to promulgate that agenda, indeed that he viewed the two genres as complementary discourses that could respond to the crises he would later outline in detail in the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*. In addition, they show that he was quite deliberate in his choices as a commentator, that he was not – as an older, now discredited view had it – merely filling in gaps in the patristic corpus, let alone plodding along as a compiler, but carefully selecting texts with a great deal of forethought and ingenuity, and interpreting them with an eye toward issues at large in his own day.[73]

The best evidence of this comes from *In Ezram*. In addition to its preoccupation with the themes of sin, repentance and conversion through the pastoral work of *praedicatores et doctores*, the work contains a cluster of highly topical passages that directly echo the *Epistola*. One of these is clearly relevant to the pseudo-minister issue. Commenting on Ezra 6.13–18, which deals with the newly completed Temple's staffing by great numbers of priests and Levites, Bede observes that 'This should be impressed as often as possible on those who, though founding monasteries with splendid workmanship, in no way appoint teachers in them to exhort the people to God's work but those who will serve their own pleasures and desires there'.[74] This sounds very much like what Bede would fulminate about when he wrote to Ecgberht: that some were building

[73] See also Faith Wallis's essay 'Why did Bede write a commentary on Revelation?' in Chapter 1 of this collection.

[74] *In Ezram et Neemiam* (ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A, 237–392), 2, lines 597–604: 'Ordo poscebat deuotionis ut post aedificatam ac dedicatam domum domini mox sacerdotes ac leuitae qui in ea ministrarent ordinarentur ne sine causa domus erecta fulgeret si deessent qui intus Deo seruirent. Quod saepius inculcandum eis qui monasteria magnifico opere construentes nequaquam in his statuunt doctores qui ad opera Dei populum cohortentur sed suis potius inibi uoluptatibus ac desideriis seruiunt'. Translation: DeGregorio, *On Ezra and Nehemiah*, 102.

lavish monasteries more for their own pleasure than for any spiritual or pastoral motive, making them effectively 'useless to man and God'. In fact even Bede's wording here, *suis potius inibi uoluptatibus ac desideriis seruiunt*, finds an echo in the letter's *suis tantum inibi desideriis … deseruiunt*.[75] This, to my knowledge, is the only such reference to lax monasteries in Bede's exegetical corpus. As such it is one of several tell-tale signs of a strong connection between the Ezra commentary and the Ecgberht letter.

There is also a good deal to be found in this commentary on the need for more bishops, teachers and preachers to care for the faithful. Alone that it hardly notable: Bede's commentaries are generally pastoral in focus and often dwell on the importance of teaching and preaching. But again, what makes *In Ezram* special in this regard is not the mere presence of such themes but the fact that their expression so closely parallels what we find in the *Epistola*. Here, for example, are Bede's remarks on Ezra 3.8, which similarly deals with the appointment of Levites to work in the Temple: 'For in the same way today too … bishops and priests have a duty to build the congregation of the faithful (namely, God's house) by teaching, and, by taking counsel, to appoint teachers for them able diligently to fulfill the most holy work of the word'.[76] Taken in itself, this comment on the need for bishops to appoint sufficient numbers of teachers and preachers recalls that passage in the letter where Bede tells Ecgberht that 'it is clearly essential that you appoint others to help you in your holy work; thus priests should be ordained and teachers established who may preach the word of God ….'[77] But it is what follows in the commentary, namely Bede's recognition that such an arrangement has been thwarted by 'the slothfulness of our times' (*nostrorum socodiam temporum*),[78] that draws the passage unmistakably into the letter's orbit. Like the *Epistola*, Bede's commentary appears to be specially keyed

---

[75] *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*, 12: 'Sicque usurpatis sibi agellulis siue uicis, liberi exinde a diuino simul et humano seruitio, suis tantum inibi desideriis laici monachis imperantes deseruiunt. …'.

[76] *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 1, lines 1445–52: 'Eodem namque ordine etiam nunc non solum episcopi ac presbiteri plebem fidelium domum uidelicet dei debent aedificare docendo et doctores illi qui opus uerbi sanctissimum diligenter impleant consulendo praeponere sed et ipse populus de captiuitate uitiorum ad uisionem uerae pacis uocatus ministerium sibi uerbi necesse est ab his qui dicere norunt exigat'. Translation: DeGregorio, *On Ezra and Nehemiah*, 62.

[77] The passage is quoted above, n. 12.

[78] *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 1, lines 1463–70: 'Sed heu pro dolor iuuat nostrorum socordiam temporum maioresque simul et minores laedit hos a praedicando uerbum illos ab audiendo utrosque a faciendo praepediens quod minus sollicite pensamus uel quanta acerbitas daemonicae captiuitatis de qua eruti sumus uel quanta sit sollemnitas ad quam uocati sumus supernae Hierusalem matris omnium nostrum cuius in praesenti ecclesia iam pignus accepimus'. Translation: DeGregorio, *On Ezra and Nehemiah*, 62–3.

to a Northumbrian register, speaking to issues at large in his day that especially troubled him and that he was eager to address.

This is very much confirmed by some material that comes later in the commentary. Here there are two thematic clusters that especially stand out. The first pertains directly to the theme of episcopal authority and so is highly intriguing for its Northumbrian associations. Early in the *Epistola*, we recall, Bede's theme was the necessity of 'holy living and teaching' as absolute imperatives for Ecgberht to uphold in his most sacred office, especially since it has been reported that some bishops had fallen into a profligate lifestyle. In his discussion of Nehemiah 1.3, where the subject is the dilapidated state of Jerusalem's city walls, Bede draws an analogy with the destruction wrought on the Christian soul by sin and then develops a further level of comment that strongly recalls his admonition to Ecgberht on this very issue:

> It is even more lamentable if those very ones who should have been profiting others through their teaching and personal example show to observers an example of destruction in themselves by living corruptly. For this is what is meant by the fact that the gates of Jerusalem were burned down by enemy flames: that those who ought, by living and teaching well, to have been introducing worthy people into the assembly of the elect and keeping unworthy people out, perish instead in the fire of avarice, self-indulgence, pride, strife, envy, and the rest of the vices that the evil enemy is wont to bring in.[79]

As in the letter, the point is made that society is especially imperilled when those in positions of spiritual authority and power become forces for corruption rather than salvation. Indeed the very substance of Bede's appeal in the letter is that Ecgberht must act swiftly and assertively in putting an end to clerical corruption.

In this connection, Bede's treatment of the figure of Ezra is of the utmost importance. Ezra's role in the story appears to have caught Bede's attention for the relevance it had *inter alia* to the Northumbrian situation, indeed even to the very role Ecgberht himself ought to play. Thus, when Bede encounters the story in Ezra 9.1–2 of the returnees marrying foreign women and some of leaders

[79] *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 3, lines 71–9: 'Quod eo magis dolendum sit necesse est si et ipsi qui aliis doctrina uel exemplo prodesse debuerant exemplum interitus sese cernentibus corrupte uiuendo praemonstrant. Hoc est enim portas Hierusalem flammis hostilibus esse perustas, eos qui bene uiuendo ac docendo dignos in coetum electorum introducere indignos uero arcere debuerant auaritiae luxoriae superbiae contentionis inuidiae ceterorum que quae hostis malignus ingerere solet uitiorum incendio perire'. Translation: DeGregorio, *On Ezra and Nehemiah*, 156–7.

reporting the matter to Ezra, their *pontifex* or high-priest, once again he turns it into a paradigm for future action:

> And it should be carefully noted and used as an example of good works that while some leaders sinned and caused the common people who were entrusted to them to sin, other leaders who were of more wholesome view for their part do their best to correct those sins; but because they cannot do this themselves they refer the matter to their pontifex (i.e. their archbishop) so that by his authority so grave, so manifold, and so long-lasting a sin can be expiated.[80]

Even without the *Epistola*, the equation *pontifex, id est archiepiscopus* would be arresting. What did Bede mean by it? And when we do add all the implications that the *Epistola* raises for such a merger of pontifical and episcopal roles, some rather tantalising possibilities emerge. Was Bede thinking here, perhaps, of his friend Ecgberht? Put another way: Was Ecgberht part of the commentary's envisioned readership? I have argued that *In Ezram* is a late work, maybe even one that carried into the early 730s.[81] Was Bede already anticipating the consecration of an archbishop for the North, and hinting at that some years before writing to Ecgberht? It is possible. At the very least, in the light of the troubled episcopal crisis outlined in the letter, the strongly reformist message of the pontifex–archbishop image is clear. It is incumbent upon bishops such as Ecgberht to follow the example of the pontifex Ezra by using their authority and zeal to set straight wayward priests and laymen and thereby lead society to reform, just as the *Epistola* would later demand.

There is one more passage from *In Ezram* that deserves our attention, for it is no less striking than the foregoing, again having direct links to the *Epistola*. Nehemiah 5.1–4 reports that once the returnees had been resettled in Jerusalem they were kept from their work because of famine and other hardship brought on by the greed of their rulers, who taxed them unnecessarily. As Bede saw, the mention of unjust taxation afforded another opportunity to turn the text toward something specific in his own experience, namely the practice of episcopal

[80] *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 2, lines 1580–89: '... notandumque diligenter atque in exemplo operis trahendum quod ea quae principes peccauerunt et plebem sibi commissam peccare fecerunt aeque principes alii qui sanius subponebant corrigere satagunt; uerum quia per se ipsos nequeunt referunt ad pontificem, id est archiepiscopum, suum causam cuius auctoritate flagitium tam graue tam multifidum tam diutinum expietur'. Translation: DeGregorio, *On Ezra and Nehemiah*, 138–9.

[81] See: DeGregorio, *On Ezra and Nehemiah*, xxxxvii–xlii; also 'Reform of the Northumbrian Church', 21–3.

tributa that he would later attack full barrel in the letter. And so Bede writes, zeroing in on the present:

> In the same way, we see that this occurs among us today. For how many are there among God's people who willingly desire to comply with divine commands but are hindered from being able to fulfil what they desire not only by a lack of temporal means and by poverty but also by the examples of those who seem to be endowed with the garb of religion, but who exact an immense tax and weight of worldly goods [*immensum rerum saecularium pondus ac uectigal*] from those who they claim to be in charge of while in return giving nothing for their eternal salvation either by teaching them or by providing them with examples of good living or by devoting effort to works of piety for them.[82]

Later, in his exegesis of part of Nehemiah 12.44, which reads 'For Judah was pleased with the ministering priests and Levites', Bede returns to the theme, attacking:

> ... those priests and ministers of holy things who are happy to exact from the people the payment owing to their office [*sumptus quidem suo gradui debitos*] but are not at all willing to labour for their salvation, nor to offer them any holy guidance by living uprightly, nor to sing of the pleasantness of the heavenly kingdom by delightfully preaching to them.[83]

---

[82] *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 3, lines 820–37: 'Desiderabat quidem populus murum construere ciuitatis sed magnitudine famis ab opera sancto praepediebatur. Quam uidelicet famem non solum penuria frugum sed et principum auaritia fecerat cum ab eodem populo maiora quam reddere poterat tributa exigerent. Quod apud nos cotidie eodem ordine fieri uidemus. Quanti enim sunt in populo Dei qui diuinis libenter cupiunt obtemperare mandatis sed ne possint implere quod cupiunt et inopia rerum temporalium ac paupertate et exemplis retardantur eorum qui habitu religionis uidentur esse praediti cum ipsi ab eis quibus praeesse uidentur et immensum rerum saecularium pondus ac uectigal exigunt et nihil eorum saluti perpetuae uel docendo uel exempla uiuendi praebendo uel opera pietatis impendendo conferunt'. Translation: DeGregorio, *On Ezra and Nehemiah*, 184.

[83] *In Ezram et Neemiam*, 3, lines 1863–74: 'Sed uae illis sacerdotibus ac ministris sanctorum qui sumptus quidem suo gradui debitos sumere a populo delectantur sed nil pro eiusdem populi student salute laborare non aliquid sacri ducatus ei recte uiuendo praebere non de suauitate regni caelestis ei quippiam dulce praedicando canere sed nec ianuas ei supernae ciuitatis aperire municipatum in caelis habendo uerum potius occludere peruerse agendo probantur in quorum operibus nequaquam confitens siue laudans dominum populus laetari sed multo magis cogitur affligi'. Translation: DeGregorio, *On Ezra and Nehemiah*, 218.

Once again, the local implication of these comments is hard to miss. Like the other passages we have considered, the connections to the *Epistola* are just too strong, too close to be explained as sheer happenstance. Whatever we make of them individually, collectively they confirm that: Bede did not restrict his thoughts on reform to the *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*. Rather the evidence we have been examining makes clear that his commitment to reform began early, but undoubtedly gained intensity over the next ten years or so until, at the end of his life, he decided to take off the gloves as it were, in a final plea to a close friend, and give direct expression to things he had been saying for some time, in one way or another.

Conclusions

The question we are left with, of course, is why? What brought him at last to speak so directly, and so heatedly? If matters were that pressing, as they doubtless were to judge from the *Epistola*, why rely so long on less direct methods: counter-examples like Cuthbert, Cædmon and Ezra, the odd jab at the 'indolence of our times' and so forth. There is a temptation to see these as all-too-veiled criticism, compared to the more urgent, excoriating approach of the letter. Indeed, without the letter's hindsight, it may be asked how much of this we would even be able to recognise for what it is. There are no hard answers. Instinctively, perhaps, we return to Bede's famed discretion. He was by nature a scholar and a careful one at that. We do not need to idealise him as some quietist monk, as an earlier generation of scholarship sought to do. Another Bedan epistle, his letter to Plegwine, shows that he could be bellicose when he wished. But on the other hand it must be recalled that Bede's stated delight was 'to learn or to teach or to write',[84] and so that his instinct was to develop a programme of instruction through exegesis and exempla that he believed could, and indeed would, effect solutions.[85] Could it be as simple as that, as the end of his life approached and so much more remained to be done to pull the Northumbrian Church back from the brink, he decided to switch modes, speaking now in the highly denunciatory voice of an Isaiah, Jeremiah or some other Hebrew prophet, by forecasting the imminent doom to come, if Ecgberht failed to act? The prophetic mood of the

[84] *Historia ecclesiastica*, 5.24: '… atque inter obseruantium disciplinae regularis, et cotidianum cantandi in ecclesia curam, semper aut discere ut docere aut scribere dulce habui'.

[85] For excellent treatments of Bede's own self-understanding and the planned coherence of *oeuvre*, see R. Ray, 'Who did Bede think he was', in *Innovation and tradition*, ed. DeGregorio, 11–35; and in the same volume, A.T. Thacker, 'Bede and the ordering of understanding', 37–63.

Epistola is loud and clear: blessings to be reaped for righteous response; assured ruin to follow for the contrary. Having written no full length commentary on any of the prophets over the course of his storied exegetical career, perhaps Bede turned to them now, at least in his mind, as he looked to the future and urged the need for reform one last time.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Additamenta Coloniensia ad chronica: ed. A. Borst, MGH Quellen zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 21.2 (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2006), 780–94.

Admonitio generalis: ed. A. Boretius, MGH Capitularia regum Francorum 1 (Hannover: Hahn, 1883), 52–62.

Adomnán of Iona, *De locis sanctis*: ed. D. Meehan, *Adamnan's De locis sanctis* (Dublin: Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies, 1958).

Adso of Montier-en-Der, *De ortu et tempore Antichristi*: ed. D. Verhelst, CCCM 45 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1976), 20–30.

Agatho (pope), *Epistolae*: ed. J.P. Migne, PL 87 (Paris: 1863), cols 1161–258.

Alcuin, *De fide sanctae et individuae trinitatis*: ed. J.P. Migne, PL 101 (Paris: 1863), cols 9–64.

Alcuin, *Epistolae*: ed. E. Dümmler, MGH Epistolae (in Quart) 4 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1895), 1–481.

Alcuin, *Versus de patribus regibus et sanctis Euboricensis ecclesiae*: ed. and trans. P. Godman, *The Bishops, Kings, and Saints of York* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

Aldhelm of Malmesbury, *De virginitate prosa*: ed. S. Gwara, CCSL 124 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001); trans. M. Lapidge and M.W. Herren, *Aldhelm: the prose works* (Ipswich; Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1979), 59–132.

Aldhelm of Malmesbury, *Epistola ad Acircium*: ed. R. Ehwald, MGH Auctores antiquissimi 15 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1919), 61–204; trans. M. Lapidge and M.W. Herren, *Aldhelm: the prose works* (Ipswich; Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1979), 34–50.

Aldhelm of Malmesbury, *Epistulae*: ed. R. Ehwald, MGH Auctores antiquissimi 15 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1919), 475–503; trans. M. Lapidge and M.W. Herren, *Aldhelm: the prose works* (Ipswich; Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1979), 152–70.

Ambrose of Milan, *De Institutione Virginis*: ed. J.P. Migne, PL 16 (Paris: 1880), cols 305–34.

Annales Laureshamenses: ed. E. Katz, *Annalium Laureshamensium editio emendata secundum codicem St. Paulensem* (Graz: St Paul, 1889).

Annales Tiliani: ed. G.H. Pertz, MGH Scriptores (in Folio) 1 (Hannover: Hahn, 1826), 6, 8.

Augustine of Hippo, *Confessionum libri tredecim*: ed. L. Verheijen, CCSL 27 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1981).

Augustine of Hippo, *De catechizandis rudibus*: ed. J. Bauris, CCSL 46 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969), 121–78.

Augustine of Hippo, *De civitate Dei*: eds B. Dombart and A. Kalb, CCSL 47, 48 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1955); trans. R.W. Dyson, *Augustine: The City of God against the pagans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Augustine of Hippo, *De diversis quaestionibus LXXXIII*: ed. A. Mutzenbecher, CCSL 44A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975), 11–249.

Augustine of Hippo, *De Genesi contra Manichaeos*: ed. J.P. Migne, PL 34 (Paris: 1845), cols 173–220.

Augustine of Hippo, *Enarrationes in Psalmos*: eds E. Dekkers and J. Fraipont, CCSL 38, 39, 40 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1956).

Augustine of Hippo, *Epistulae*: ed. A. Goldbacher, CSEL 34.1, 34.2, 44, 57 (Vienna: F. Tempsky, 1895–1923).

Augustine of Hippo, *In Iohannis euangelium tractatus*: ed. D. Radbodus Willems, CCSL 36 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1954).

Augustine of Hippo, *Sermones*: ed. J.P. Migne, PL 38–9 (Paris: 1865).

Augustinus Hibernicus, *De mirabilibus sacrae scripturae*: ed. J.P. Migne, PL 35 (Paris: 1902), cols 2149–200.

Beati Flacci Alcuini Vita: ed. J.P. Migne, PL 100 (Paris: 1863), cols 88–106.

Bede, *Chronica maiora*, ed. T. Mommsen, MGH Auct. ant. 13 (Berlin, 1888), 231–327.

Bede, *Collectio Bedae presbyteri ex opusculis sancti Augustini in Epistulas Pauli Apostoli*: unpublished; trans. D. Hurst, *Bede the Venerable: Excerpts from the works of Saint Augustine on the letters of the blessed Apostle Paul* (Cistercian Publications: Kalamazoo, MI, 1999).

Bede, *De arte metrica*: ed. C.B. Kendall, CCSL 123A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975), 82–141; trans. C.B. Kendall, *Libri II de arte metrica et de schematibus et tropis: The art of poetry and rhetoric* (Saarbrücken: AQ-Verlag, 1991).

Bede, *De eo quod ait Isaias*: ed. J.P. Migne, PL 94 (Paris: 1862), cols 702–10; trans. A. Holder, *Bede: A biblical miscellany* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 39–52.

Bede, *De locis sanctis*: ed. J. Fraipont, CCSL 175 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1965), 245–80; trans. W. Trent Foley, *Bede: A biblical miscellany* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 5–26.

Bede, *De mansionibus filiorum Israel*: ed. J.P. Migne, PL 94 (Paris: 1862), cols 699–702; trans. A. Holder, *Bede: A biblical miscellany* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 29–34.

Bede, *De natura rerum*: ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975), 189–234; trans. C.B. Kendall and F. Wallis, *Bede: On the nature of things and On times* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 71–103.

Bede, *De schematibus et tropis*: ed. C.B. Kendall, CCSL 123A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975), 142–71; trans. C.B. Kendall, *Libri II de arte metrica et de schematibus et tropis: The art of poetry and rhetoric* (Saarbrücken: AQ-Verlag, 1991).

Bede, *De tabernaculo*: ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969), 5–139; trans. A. Holder, *Bede: On the Tabernacle* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1994).

Bede, *De templo*: ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969), 143–234; trans. S. Connolly, *Bede: On the Temple* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995).

Bede, *De temporibus*: ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123C (Turnhout: Brepols, 1980), 585–611; trans. C.B. Kendall and F. Wallis, *Bede: On the nature of things and On times* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010), 106–31.

Bede, *De temporum ratione*: ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123B (Turnhout: Brepols, 1977), 263–544; trans. F. Wallis, *Bede: The reckoning of time*, revised 2nd edition (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004).

Bede, *Epistola ad Ecgbertum*: ed. C. Plummer, *VBOH* (2 vols, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), I, 405–23; trans. J. McClure and R. Collins, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English people* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 341–57.

Bede, *Epistola ad Pleguinam*: ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123C (Turnhout: Brepols, 1980), 617–26; trans. F. Wallis, *Bede: The reckoning of time*, revised 2nd edition (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004), 405–15.

Bede, *Epistula ad Albinum*: ed. and trans. J.A. Westgard, 'New manuscripts of Bede's letter to Albinus', *Revue Bénédictine*, 120 (2010), 208–15.

Bede, *Epistula ad Helmuualdum*: ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 123C (Turnhout: Brepols, 1980), 629; trans. F. Wallis, *Bede: The reckoning of time*, revised 2nd edition (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004), 416.

Bede, *Expositio Actuum Apostolorum*: ed. M.L.W. Laistner, CCSL 121 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1983), 3–99; trans. L.T. Martin, *The Venerable Bede: Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1989).

Bede, *Expositio Apocalypseos*: ed. R. Gryson, CCSL 121A (Turnhout: Brepols, 2001); trans. F. Wallis, *Bede: Commentary on Revelation* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013).

Bede, *Expositio in Canticum Abacuc prophetae*: ed. J.E. Hudson, CCSL 119B (Turnhout: Brepols, 1983), 381–409; trans. S. Connolly, *Bede: On Tobit and On the Canticle of Habakkuk* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997), 65–96.

Bede, *Historia abbatum (Vita BB. Abbatum Benedicti, Ceolfridi, Eosterwini, Sigfridi et Hwaetberti)*: ed. C. Plummer, *VBOH* (2 vols, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), I, 364–87; trans. D.H. Farmer and J.F. Webb, *The Age of Bede* (London: Penguin, 1998), 185–210; ed. and trans. C.W. Grocock and I.N. Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Bede, *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*: ed. and trans. [English] B. Colgrave and R.A.B Mynors, *BEH* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); ed. M. Lapidge and trans. [Italian] P. Chiesa, *Storia degli inglesi* (2 vols, Rome; Milan: Fondazione Lorenzo Valla; A. Mondadori, 2008–10).

Bede, *Homiliarum euangelii libri II*: ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 122 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1955), 1–378; trans. L.T. Martin and D. Hurst, *Bede: Homilies on the Gospels* (2 vols, Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1991).

Bede, *Hymni*: ed. J. Fraipont, CCSL 122 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1955), 407–38.

Bede, *In Cantica Canticorum*: ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119B (Turnhout: Brepols, 1983), 167–375; trans. A. Holder, *The Venerable Bede: On the Song of Songs and selected writings* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2011).

Bede, *In epistulas septem catholicas*: ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 121 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1983), 181–342; trans. D. Hurst, *The Commentary on the Seven Catholic Epistles of Bede the Venerable* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1985).

Bede, *In Ezram et Neemiam*: ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969), 237–392; trans. S. DeGregorio, *Bede: On Ezra and Nehemiah* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006).

Bede, *In Lucae evangelium expositio*: ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 120 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1960), 5–425.

Bede, *In Marci evangelium expositio*: ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 120 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1960), 431–648.

Bede, *In primam partem Samuhelis*: ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1962), 5–287; ed. J.P. Migne, PL 91 (Paris: 1862), cols 499–714.

Bede, *In prouerbia Salomonis*: ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119B (Turnhout: Brepols, 1983), 23–163.

Bede, *In Regum librum XXX quaestiones*: ed. D. Hurst, CCSL 119 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1962), 293–322; trans. W. Trent Foley, *Bede: A biblical miscellany* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 89–138.

Bede, *Libri quattuor in principium Genesis usque ad natiuitatem Isaac et eiectionem Ismahelis adnotationum (siue Hexaemeron)*: ed. C.W. Jones, CCSL 118A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1967); trans. C.B. Kendall, *Bede: On Genesis* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008).

Bede, *Martyrologium*: eds J. Dubois and G. Renaud, Édition *pratique des martyrologes de Bède, de l'anonyme lyonnais et de Florus* (Paris: Editions du Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1976); trans. F. Lifshitz, 'Bede, *Martyrology*', in *Medieval Hagiography: an Anthology*, ed. T. Head (New York, NY: Garland, 2000), 169–98.

Bede, *Nomina regionum atque locorum de Actibus Apostolorum*: ed. M.L.W. Laistner, CCSL 121 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1983), 167–78.

Bede, *Passio Anastasii*: ed. C.V. Franklin, *The Latin dossier of Anastasius the Persian: hagiographic translations and transformations*, Studies and Texts 147 (Toronto, ON: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 2004), 387–416.

Bede, *Retractatio in Actuum Apostolorum*: ed. M.L.W. Laistner, CCSL 121 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1983), 103–63.

Bede, *Vita Cuthberti metrica*: ed. W. Jaager, *Bedas metrische Vita sancti Cuthberti*, Palaestra 198 (Leipzig: Mayer and Müller, 1935).

Bede, *Vita Felicis*: ed. T. Mackay, *A critical edition of Bede's 'Vita Felicis'* (PhD Thesis, Stanford University, 1971).

Bede, *Vita Sancti Cuthberti* (prose): ed. and trans. B. Colgrave, *Two Lives of Saint Cuthbert: a Life by an anonymous monk of Lindisfarne, and Bede's prose Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1940), 142–306.

Boniface, *Epistolae*: ed. M. Tangl, MGH Epistolae Selectae 1 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1916), 56–8.

Caesarius of Arles, *Expositio in Apocalypsim*: ed. G. Morin, *S. Caesarii opera omnia* (3 vols, Maredsous: 1937–42), II, 210–77.

Capitula, de quibus convocati compotiste interrogati fuerint, responsiones quoque eorum, quales et ordine quo reddite fuerint, hic pariter ostenduntur: ed. A. Borst, MGH Quellen zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 21.3 (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2006), 1040–53.

Cassiodorus, *Complexiones in Apocalypsin*: ed. R. Gryson, CCSL 107 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 113–129.

Cassiodorus, *Expositio Psalmorum*: ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL 97, 98 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1958).

Chronicon universale – 741: ed. G. Waitz, MGH Scriptores (in Folio) 13 (Hannover: Hahn, 1881), 4–19.

Cologne prologue: ed. B. Krusch, *Studien zur christlich-mittelalterlichen Chronologie. Der 84 Jährige Ostercyclus und seine Quellen* (Leipzig: Von Veit, 1880), 227–35.

Commentarius primus in Pentateuchum, ed. and trans. B. Bischoff and M. Lapidge, *Biblical commentaries from the Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 298–385.

Constantius of Lyons, *Vita Germani*: ed. and trans. (French), R. Borius, *Vie de Saint Germain d'Auxerre*, Sources Chrétiennes 112 (Paris: ***Éditions*** du Cerf, 1965).

Continuatio Bedae: ed. and trans. B. Colgrave and R.A.B Mynors, *BEH* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 572–7.

Cummian, *De controversia paschali*: ed. and trans. M. Walsh and D. Ó Cróinín, *Cummian's letter 'De controversia Paschali' / together with a related Irish computistical tract 'De ratione conputandi'*, Studies and Texts 86 (Toronto, ON: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988), 55–97.

Cuthbert [Monkwearmouth-Jarrow], *Epistola de obitu Bedae*: ed. and trans. B. Colgrave and R.A.B Mynors, *BEH* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 580–87.

De ratione conputandi: ed. and trans. D. Ó Cróinín, *Cummian's letter 'De controversia Paschali' / together with a related Irish computistical tract 'De ratione conputandi'*, Studies and Texts 86 (Toronto, ON: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988), 113–213.

Decrees of the Council of Chalcedon – 451: ed. and trans. N.P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (2 vols, London; Washington D.C.: Sheed and Ward; Georgetown University Press, 1990), I, 77–103.

Decrees of the Council of Ephesus – 431: ed. and trans. N.P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (2 vols, London; Washington D.C.: Sheed and Ward; Georgetown University Press, 1990), I, 40–74.

Dialogus de computo Langobardiae: ed. A. Borst, MGH Quellen zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 21.1 (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2006), 433–61.

Dionysius Exiguus, *Epistola ad Petronium*: ed. B. Krusch, *Studien zur christlich-mittelalterlichen Chronologie. Die Entstehung unserer heutigen Zeitrechnung* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1938), 63–8.

Ecgberht of York, *Dialogus ecclesiasticae institutionis*: eds A.W. Haddan and W. Stubbs, *Councils and ecclesiastical documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland* (3 vols, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1869–78), III, 403–13.

Gennadius of Marseilles, *De viris inlustribus*: ed. E.C. Richardson, *Hieronymus, Liber de viris inlustribus. Gennadius, Liber de viris inlustribus*, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur 14.1 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1896), 57–97.

Gildas, *De excidio Britanniae*: ed. and trans. M. Winterbottom, *Gildas: The ruin of Britain and other works* (London: Phillimore, 1978).

Gregory of Tours, *Historiarum libri X*: eds B. Krusch and W. Levison, MGH Scriptorum rerum Merovingicarum 1.1 (Hannover: Hahn, 1951); trans. L. Thorpe, *Gregory of Tours: The history of the Franks* (London: Penguin, 1982).

Gregory the Great, *Dialogi*: ed. A. de Vogué, *Grégoire le Grand, Dialogues*, Sources Chrétiennes 251, 260, 265 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1978–80); trans. O.J. Zimmerman, *Dialogues of Saint Gregory the Great* (New York, NY: Fathers of the Church Inc., 1959).

Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Evangelia*: ed. R. Étaix, CCSL 141 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999); trans. D. Hurst, *Gregory the Great: Forty Gospel homilies* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1990).

Gregory the Great, *Homiliae in Hiezechielem prophetam*: ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL 142 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1971); trans. T. Gray, *The homilies of St. Gregory the Great on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel* (Etna, CA: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 1990).

Gregory the Great, *Moralia in Iob*: ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL 143, 143A, 143B (Turnhout: Brepols, 1975–85).

Gregory the Great, *Registrum epistularum*: ed. D.L. Norberg, CCSL 140, 140A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1982).

Hilarianus, *Quintus Julius, De cursu temporum*: ed. C. Frick, *Chronica minora. Vol. 1. Accedunt Hippolyti Romani praeter canonem Paschalem fragmenta chronologica* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1892), 153–74.

Hrabanus Maurus, *De computo*: ed. W.M. Stevens, CCCM 44 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1979), 205–321.

Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*: ed. and trans. [French] A. Rousseau, L. Doutreleau, B. Hemmerdinger and C. Mercier, *Irénée de Lyon, Contre les Hérésies*, Sources Chrétiennes 100–101, 152–3, 210–11, 263–4, 293–4 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1965–82).

Isidore of Seville, *Chronica*: ed. J.C. Martin, CCSL 112 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003).

Isidore of Seville, *De natura rerum*: ed. and trans. [French] J. Fontaine, *Isidore de Seville: Traité de la Nature* (Bordeaux: Féret et Fils, 1960).

Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*: ed. W.M. Lindsay, *Etymologiarum siue originum libri XX* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911); trans. S.A. Barney, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Isidore of Seville, *Historia Gothorum, Wandalorum, Sueborum*: ed. and trans. (Spanish) C. Rodríguez Alonso, *Las Historias de los Godos, Vándalos y Suevos de Isidoro de Sevilla* (León: Centro de Estudios e Investigación 'San Isidro', 1975).

Jerome, *Chronicon*: ed. R. Helm, *Eusebius Werke* 7.1, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte 24 (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1913).

Jerome, *Commentarii in Danielem*: ed. F. Glorie, CCSL 75A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1964).

Jerome, *Commentarii in Hiezechielem*: ed. F. Glorie, CCSL 75 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1964).

Jerome, *Commentarii in Isaiam*, ed. M. Adriaen, CCSL 73, 73A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1963).

Jerome, *De viris inlustribus*: ed. E.C. Richardson, *Hieronymus, Liber de viris Inlustribus. Gennadius, Liber de viris Inlustribus*, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur 14.1 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1896), 1–56.

Jerome, *Epistolae*: ed. and trans. (French), J. Labourt, *Saint Jérôme: Lettres* (8 vols, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1949–63).

Jerome, *In euangelium Matthaei*: eds D. Hurst and M. Adriaen, CCSL 77 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1969).

Jerome, *Liber interpretationis hebraicorum nominum*: ed. P. de Lagarde, CCSL 72 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1959), 59–161.

John Malalas, *Chronographia*: ed. I. Thurn, *Ioannis Malalae Chronographia*, Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 35 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2000); trans. E. Jeffreys, *The Chronicle of John Malalas: a translation* (Melbourne: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1986).

Josephus, *Antiquitates* (Books 1–5): ed. F. Blatt, *The Latin Josephus, I: introduction and text, The Antiquities*: *Books I–V* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1958).

Laterculus Malalianus: ed. and trans. J. Stevenson, *The 'Laterculus Malalianus' and the school of Archbishop Theodore* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Lectiones sive regula conputi: ed. A. Borst, MGH Quellen zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 21.2 (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2006), 544–659.

Leo the Great, *Epistula Papae Leonis ad Flavianum ep. Constantinopolitanum de Eutyche*: ed. and trans. N.P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils* (2 vols, London; Washington D.C.: Sheed and Ward; Georgetown University Press, 1990), I, 77–82.

Leo the Great, *Sermones*: ed. J.P. Migne, PL 54 (Paris: 1846), cols 137–467.

Liber de computo (703): ed. J.P. Migne, PL 129 (Paris: 1879), cols 1273–372.

Liber Pontificalis, ed. L. Duchesne, *Le Liber Pontificalis: texte, introduction et commentaire*, 2nd edition (3 vols, Paris: E. de Boccard, 1955–57).

Libri computi: ed. A. Borst, MGH Quellen zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 21.3 (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2006), 1087–1334.

Munich computus: ed. and trans. I. Warntjes, *The Munich computus: text and translation. Irish computistics between Isidore of Seville and the Venerable Bede and its reception in Carolingian times* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2010).

New International Version [Bible]: ed. The International Bible Society, *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Colorado Springs, CO: International Bible Society, 1984).

Paul I (pope), *Epistola* (to Ecgberht, archbishop of York and Eadberht, king of Northumbria): eds A.W. Haddan and W. Stubbs, *Councils and ecclesiastical documents relating to Great Britain and Ireland* (3 vols, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1869–78) III, 394–6; trans. D. Whitelock, *English historical documents, c. 500–1042*, 2nd edition (London: Eyre Methuen, 1979), no. 184, 830–31.

Primasius, *Commentarius in Apocalypsin*: ed. A.W. Adams, CCSL 92 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1985).

Prosper of Aquitaine, *Epitoma chronicon*: ed. T. Mommsen, MGH Auctores antiquissimi 9 (Berlin: Weidmann, 1892), 385–485.

Pseudo-Methodius (translation by Petrus Monachus), *Sermo de regnum gentium et in novissimis temporibus certa demonstratio* (*The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*): eds J. Aerts and G.A.A. Kortekaas, *Die Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius: die ältesten griechischen und lateinischen Übersetzungen*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 570 (Leuven: Peeters, 1998); trans. B. Garstad, *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius. An Alexandrian World Chronicle*, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 14 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

Quaestiones de computo Austrasiae: ed. A. Borst, MGH Quellen zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 21.1 (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2006), 466–508.

Rufinus of Aquileia, *Historia ecclesiastica* (translation and continuation of Eusebius of Caesarea): ed. T. Mommsen, *Eusebius Werke* 2.1–2, Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte, 9.1–2 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1903–08).

Series annorum mundi nova: ed. A. Borst, MGH Quellen zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 21.2 (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2006), 971–1008.

Series annorum mundi secundum antiquos patres: ed. A. Borst, MGH Quellen zur Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters 21.2 (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2006), 1015–20.

Stephen of Ripon, *Vita Wilfridi*: ed. and trans. B. Colgrave, *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid by Eddius Stephanus* (Cambridge, 1927); trans. D.H. Farmer and J.F. Webb, *The Age of Bede* (London: Penguin, 1998), 105–84.

Theophanes the Confessor, *Chronographia*: ed. C. De Boor, *Theophanis Chronographia* (2 vols, Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1883, 1885); trans. C. Mango and R. Scott, with the assistance of G. Greatrex, *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and near-Eastern History, AD 284–813* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

Tyconius, *Expositio Apocalypseos*: ed. R. Gryson, CCSL 107A (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011); trans. (French) R. Gryson, *Tyconius: Commentaire de l'Apocalypse*, Corpus Christianorum in Translation 10 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011).

'*Victorian prologue*': ed. and trans. I. Warntjes, 'A newly discovered prologue of AD 699 to the Easter table of Victorius of Aquitaine in an unknown Sirmond manuscript', *Peritia*, 21 (2010), 255–84, at 271–4.

Victorinus of Pettau, *In Apocalypsin*: ed. and trans. [French] M. Dulaey, *Victorin. Sur l'Apocalypse: suivi du fragment chronologique et de La construction du monde: introduction, texte critique, traduction, commentaire et index,* Sources Chrétiennes 423 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1997), 46–122.

Victorius, *Prologus*: ed. B. Krusch, *Studien zur christlich-mittelalterlichen Chronologie. Die Entstehung unserer heutigen Zeitrechnung* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1938), 17–26.

Virgil, *Aeneid*: ed. R.A.B. Mynors, *P. Vergili Maronis opera* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).

Vita Ceolfridi: ed. C. Plummer, *VBOH* (2 vols, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), I, 388–404; trans. D.H. Farmer and J.F. Webb, *The Age of Bede* (London: Penguin, 1998), 211–30; ed. and trans. C.W. Grocock and I.N. Wood, *Abbots of Wearmouth and Jarrow* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Vulgate [Bible]: eds H.F.D. Sparks, W. Thiele and R. Weber, *Biblia sacra iuxta Uulgatam uersionem*, Württembergische Bibelanstalt (Stuttgart, 1975); trans. *Douay-Rheims Bible* (Baltimore, MD: John Murphy Company, 1899).

Secondary Literature

Archambault, P., 'The ages of man and the ages of the world: a study of two traditions', *Revue des Études Augustiniennes*, 12 (1966), 193–228.

Barnard, L.W., 'Bede and Eusebius as Church historians', in *Famulus Christi. Essays in commemoration of the thirteenth centenary of the birth of the Venerable Bede*, ed. G. Bonner (London: SPCK, 1976), 106–24.

Barrow, J.S., 'How Coifi pierced Christ's side: a re-examination of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History*, II, Chapter 13', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 62 (2011), 693–706.

Bauckham, R.J., 'The martyrdom of Enoch and Elijah: Jewish or Christian?' *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 95 (1976), 447–58.

Belting, H., *Likeness and presence: a history of the image before the era of art*, trans. E. Jephcott (Chicago, IL; London: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

Berschin, W., '*Opus deliberatum ac perfectum*: why did the Venerable Bede write a second prose *Life of Saint Cuthbert*?' in *St. Cuthbert, his cult and his community to AD 1200*, eds G. Bonner, D.W. Rollason and C. Stancliffe (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1989), 95–102.

Bickerman, E.J., *Chronology of the ancient world*, revised 2nd edition (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980).

Bischoff, B. and Lapidge, M., *Biblical commentaries from the Canterbury School of Theodore and Hadrian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Blair, J., *The Church in Anglo-Saxon society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Blair, P.H., *The world of Bede*, revised 2nd edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

Bolton, W.F., 'An aspect of Bede's later knowledge of Greek', *The Classical Review*, 13 (1963), 17–18.

Bolton, W.F., *A history of Anglo-Latin literature, 597–1066, vol. 1* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1967).

Bonner, G. (ed.), *Famulus Christi. Essays in commemoration of the thirteenth centenary of the birth of the Venerable Bede* (London: SPCK, 1976).

Bonner, G., *Saint Bede in the tradition of western Apocalyptic commentary* (Jarrow: Jarrow Lecture, 1966); reprinted in *Bede and his world: the Jarrow*

Lectures 1958–1993, ed. M. Lapidge (2 vols, Aldershot: Variorum, 1994), I, 153–83.

Bowersock, G.W., *The throne of Adulis: Red Sea wars on the eve of Islam* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013).

Brooks, N.P., 'From British to English Christianity: deconstructing Bede's interpretation of the conversion', in *Conversion and colonization in Anglo-Saxon England*, eds C.E. Karkov and N. Howe (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006), 1–30.

Brooks, N.P., *Bede and the English* (Jarrow: Jarrow Lecture, 1999).

Brown, G.H., 'Bede and change', in *'Aedifica nova': studies in honor of Rosemary Cramp*, eds C.E. Karkov and H. Damico (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2008), 33–42.

Brown, G.H., 'Bede's style in his commentary on *I Samuel*', in *Text, image, interpretation: studies in Anglo-Saxon literature and its Insular context in honour of* Éamonn Ó *Carragáin*, eds A. Minnis and J. Roberts (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 233–51.

Brown, G.H., *A companion to Bede* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2009).

Brown, M.P., *'In the beginning was the Word': books and faith in the Age of Bede* (Jarrow: Jarrow Lecture, 2000).

Burrow, J.A., *The Ages of man: a study in medieval writing and thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986).

Campbell, J., 'Bede I', in *Essays in Anglo-Saxon history*, ed. J. Campbell (London: Hambledon Press, 1986), 1–28.

Campbell, J., 'Bede', in *Latin historians*, ed. T.A. Dorey (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), 159–90.

Campbell, J., 'Secular and political contexts', in *The Cambridge companion to Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 25–39.

Carroll, M.T.A., *The Venerable Bede: his spiritual teachings* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1946).

Chambers, R.W., 'Bede', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 22 (1936), 129–56.

Cheney, C.R. and Jones, M., *A handbook of dates for students of British History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Chesnut, G.F., 'Eusebius, Augustine, Orosius, and the later patristic and medieval Christian historians', in *Eusebius, Christianity, and Judaism*, eds H.W. Attridge and G. Hata (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 687–713.

Chesnut, G.F., *The first Christian histories: Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret, and Evagrius* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1986).

Coates, S., 'The bishop as benefactor and civic patron: Alcuin, York, and episcopal authority in Anglo-Saxon England', *Speculum*, 71 (1996), 529–58.

Collins, R., *Die Fredegar-Chroniken*, MGH Texte und Studien 44 (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 2007).

Collins, R., *Early Medieval Europe, 300–1000*, 3rd edition (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

Collins, R., *The Arab conquest of Spain: 710–797* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

Collins, R., *Visigothic Spain, 409–711* (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

Cordoliani, A., 'L'évolution du comput ecclésiastique à Saint Gall du VIIIe au XIe siècle', *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Kirchengeschichte*, 49 (1955), 288–324.

Cordoliani, A., 'Les manuscrits de comput ecclésiastique de l'Abbaye de Saint Gall du VIIIe au XIIe siècle', *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Kirchengeschichte*, 49 (1955), 161–200.

Corning, C., *The Celtic and Roman traditions: conflict and consensus in the Early Medieval Church* (New York, NY; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

Cosentino, S., 'Byzantine Sardinia between West and East: features of a regional culture', *Millennium: Jahrbuch zu Kultur und Geschichte des ersten Jahrtausends*, 1 (2004), 329–67.

Cramp, R., *Wearmouth and Jarrow monastic sites* (2 vols, Swindon: English Heritage, 2005–06).

Cubitt, C., 'Pastoral care and conciliar canons: the provisions of the 747 Council of Clofesho', in *Pastoral care before the parish*, eds J. Blair and R. Sharpe (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992), 193–211.

Cubitt, C., 'The clergy in early Anglo-Saxon England', *Historical Research*, 78 (2005), 273–87.

Cubitt, C., 'Wilfrid, a man for his times', in *Wilfrid: abbot, bishop, saint, papers from the 1300th anniversary conferences*, ed. N.J. Higham (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2013), 311–30.

Cuppo, L., 'Felix of Squillace and the Dionysiac computus', in *The Easter controversy of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages: its manuscripts, texts, and tables*, eds I. Warntjes and D. Ó Cróinín (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 110–36.

Dagens, C., 'La fin des temps et l'Église selon Saint Grégoire le Grand', *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, 58 (1970), 273–88.

Daley, B.E., 'Apocalypticism in Early Christian Theology', in *The Continuum history of apocalypticism*, eds B. McGinn, J.J. Collins and S.J. Stein (New York, NY; London: Continuum, 2003), 221–53.

Daley, B.E., *The hope of the Early Church: a handbook of Early Christian eschatology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

Daniel, N., *Islam and the West: the making of an image*, revised edition (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1993).

Daniélou, J., 'La typologie millénariste de la semaine dans le christianisme primitif', *Vigiliae christianae*, 2 (1948), 1–16.

Darby, P.N., 'Bede, Iconoclasm and the Temple of Solomon', *Early Medieval Europe*, 21 (2013), 390–421.

Darby, P.N., 'Bede's time shift of 703 in context', in *Abendländische Apokalyptik. Kompendium zur Genealogie der Endzeit*, eds V. Wieser, C. Zolles, C. Feik, M. Zolles and L. Schlöndorff (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2013), 619–40.

Darby, P.N., *Bede and the end of time* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012).

Davidse, J., 'The sense of history in the works of the Venerable Bede', *Studi Medievali*, 23 (1982), 647–95.

Davis, R., 'Bede's early reading', *Speculum*, 8 (1933), 179–95.

Declercq, G., *Anno Domini: the origins of the Christian era* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000).

DeGregorio, S. (ed.), *Innovation and tradition in the writings of the Venerable Bede* (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2006).

DeGregorio, S. (ed.), *The Cambridge companion to Bede* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

DeGregorio, S., '*Nostrorum socordiam temporum*': the reforming impulse of Bede's later exegesis', *Early Medieval Europe*, 11 (2002), 107–22.

DeGregorio, S., 'Bede and the Old Testament', in *The Cambridge companion to Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 127–41.

DeGregorio, S., 'Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam* and the reform of the Northumbrian Church', *Speculum*, 79 (2004), 1–25.

DeGregorio, S., 'Bede's *In Ezram et Neemiam*: a document in Church reform?' in *Bède le Vénérable entre tradition et postérité / The Venerable Bede: Tradition and posterity*, eds S. Lebecq, M. Perrin and O. Szerwiniack (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Centre de gestion de l'édition scientifique, Université Charles-de-Gaulle – Lille III, 2005), 97–107.

DeGregorio, S., 'Footsteps of his own: Bede's commentary on Ezra-Nehemiah', in *Innovation and tradition in the writings of the Venerable Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2006), 143–68.

DeGregorio, S., 'Introduction: The new Bede', in *Innovation and tradition in the writings of the Venerable Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2006), 1–10.

DeGregorio, S., 'Literary contexts: Cædmon's Hymn as a center of Bede's World', in *Cædmon's Hymn and material culture in the world of Bede*, eds A.J. Frantzen and J. Hines (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2008), 51–79.

DeGregorio, S., 'Monasticism and reform in Book IV of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 61 (2010), 673–87.

DeGregorio, S., 'The Venerable Bede and Gregory the Great: exegetical connections, spiritual departures', *Early Medieval Europe*, 18 (2010), 43–60.

Deliyannis, D.M., 'Year dates in the early middle ages', in *Time in the medieval world*, eds C. Humphrey and W.M. Ormrod (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2001), 5–22.

Dionisotti, A.C., 'On Bede, grammars, and Greek', *Revue Bénédictine*, 92 (1982), 111–41.

Dulaey, M., 'Jérôme, Victorin de Poetovio et le millénarisme', in *Jérôme entre l'Occident et l'Orient*, ed. Y-M. Duval (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1988), 83–98.

Emmerson, R.K. and McGinn, B. (eds), *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).

Ewig, E., 'Die fränkischen Königskataloge und der Aufstieg der Karolinger', *Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters*, 51 (1995), 1–28.

Farmer, D.H., 'Saint Wilfrid', in *Saint Wilfrid at Hexham*, ed. D.P. Kirby (Newcastle upon Tyne: Oriel Press, 1974), 35–60.

Ferguson, C., 'Re-evaluating early medieval Northumbrian contacts and the 'coastal highway'', in *Early Medieval Northumbria: kingdoms and communities, AD 450–1100*, eds D. Petts and S. Turner (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 283–302.

Fisher, D.J.V., 'The Church in England between the death of Bede and the Danish invasions', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 2 (1952), 1–19.

Fletcher, R.A., *Moorish Spain* (paperback reprint, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006).

Fletcher, R.A., *The Barbarian conversion: from paganism to Christianity* (paperback reprint, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999).

Fletcher, R.A., *The Cross and the Crescent: the dramatic story of the earliest encounters between Christians and Muslims* (London; New York, NY: Penguin, 2005).

Foley, W.T. and Higham, N.J., 'Bede on the Britons', *Early Medieval Europe*, 17 (2009), 154–85.

Foley, W.T., 'Bede's exegesis of passages unique to the Gospel of Mark', in *Biblical studies in the Early Middle Ages*, eds C. Leonardi and G. Orlandi (Florence: Sismel, 2005), 105–24.

Foot, S., 'Church and monastery in Bede's Northumbria', in *The Cambridge companion to Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 54–68.

Foot, S., *Monastic life in Anglo-Saxon England, c. 600–900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Franklin, C.V. and Meyvaert, P., 'Has Bede's version of the *Passio S. Anastasii* come down to us in BHL 408?' *Analecta Bollandiana*, 100 (1982), 373–400.

Franklin, C.V., 'The date of composition of Bede's *De schematibus et tropis* and *De arte metrica*', *Revue Bénédictine*, 110 (2000), 199–203.

Fredriksen, P., 'Apocalypse and redemption in Early Christianity: from John of Patmos to Augustine of Hippo', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 45 (1991), 151–83.

Fredriksen, P., 'Tyconius and Augustine on the Apocalypse', in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, eds R.K. Emmerson and B. McGinn (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 20–37.

Fredriksen, P., 'Tyconius and the end of the world', *Revue des Études Augustiniennes*, 28 (1982), 59–75.

Fried, J., 'Die Endzeit fest im Griff des Positivismus? Zur Auseinandersetzung mit Sylvain Gouguenheim', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 275 (2002), 281–321.

Garipzanov, I., 'The Carolingian abbreviation of Bede's world chronicle and Carolingian imperial 'genealogy'', *Hortus Artium Medievalium*, 11 (2005), 291–8.

Goffart, W., 'Bede's history in a harsher climate', in *Innovation and tradition in the writings of the Venerable Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2006), 203–26.

Goffart, W., 'The *Historia ecclesiastica*: Bede's agenda and ours', *The Haskins Society Journal*, 2 (1990), 29–45.

Goffart, W., *The narrators of barbarian history (AD 550–800): Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).

Grocock, C.W., 'Bede and the golden age of Latin prose in Northumbria', in *Northumbria's golden age*, eds J. Hawkes and S. Mills (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), 371–82.

Gryson, R., 'Les commentaires patristiques latins de l'Apocalypse [part 2]', *Revue théologique de Louvain*, 28 (1997), 484–502.

Gunn, V., *Bede's Historiae: genre, rhetoric and the construction of Anglo-Saxon Church History* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2009).

Hahn, T., *Tyconius-Studien. Ein Beitrag zur Kirchen- und Dogmengeschichte des vierten Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig: Dieterich, 1900).

Hallenbeck, J.T., *The transferal of the relics of St. Augustine of Hippo from Sardinia to Pavia in the Early Middle Ages* (Lewiston, NY; Queenston, ON; Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000).

Harrison, K., 'A letter from Rome to the Irish clergy, AD 640', *Peritia*, 3 (1984), 222–9.

Harrison, K., 'The *Annus Domini* in some early charters', *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, 4 (1973).

Harrison, K., *The framework of Anglo-Saxon history to AD 900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

Hawkes, J. and Mills, S. (eds), *Northumbria's golden age* (Stroud: Sutton, 1999).

Heil, J., '"Nos nescientes de hoc velle manere" – "We wish to remain ignorant about this": timeless end, or: approaches to reconceptualizing eschatology after A.D. 800 (AM 6000)', *Traditio*, 55 (2000), 73–103.

Hen, Y., 'A Visigothic king in search of an identity – *Sisebutus Gothorum gloriosissimus princeps*', in *Ego trouble: authors and their identities in the early Middle Ages*, eds R. Corradini, M. Gillis, R. McKitterick and I. van Renswoude (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010), 89–99.

Higgitt, J., 'The dedication inscription at Jarrow and its context', *The Antiquaries Journal*, 59 (1979), 343–74.

Higham, N.J., *(Re-)reading Bede: the Ecclesiastical History in context* (London: Routledge, 2006).

Higham, N.J., *Bede as an oral historian* (Jarrow: Jarrow Lecture, 2011).

Higham, N.J., *The convert kings: power and religious affiliation in early Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997).

Higham, N.J., *The Kingdom of Northumbria, AD 350–1100* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 1993).

Hill, C.E., *Regnum caelorum: patterns of millennial thought in Early Christianity*, revised 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001).

Hilliard, P.C., 'Sacred and secular history in the writings of Bede (+735)' (PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 2007).

Hilliard, P.C., 'The Venerable Bede as scholar, gentile and preacher', in *Ego trouble: authors and their identities in the early Middle Ages*, eds R. Corradini, M. Gillis, R. McKitterick and I. van Renswoude (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2010), 101–9.

Holder, A., '(Un)dating Bede's *De arte metrica*', in *Northumbria's golden age*, eds J. Hawkes and S. Mills (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), 390–95.

Holder, A., 'Allegory and history in Bede's interpretation of sacred architecture', *American Benedictine Review*, 40 (1989), 115–31.

Holder, A., 'Bede and the New Testament', in *The Cambridge companion to Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 142–55.

Holder, A., 'Hunting snakes in the grass: Bede as Heresiologist', in *'Listen, O Isles, unto me': studies in medieval word and image in honour of Jennifer O'Reilly*, eds E. Mullins and D. Scully (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011), 105–14.

Holder, A., 'New treasures and old in Bede's *De tabernaculo* and *De templo*', *Revue Bénédictine*, 99 (1989), 237–49.

Holder, A., 'The anti-Pelagian character of Bede's commentary on the Song of Songs', in *Biblical studies in the Early Middle Ages*, eds C. Leonardi and G. Orlandi (Florence: Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2005), 91–103.

Holford-Strevens, L., 'Marital discord in Northumbria: Lent and Easter, his and hers', in *Computus and its cultural context in the Latin West, AD 300–1200: proceedings of the 1st International Conference on the Science of Computus in Ireland and Europe, Galway, 14–16 July, 2006*, eds I. Warntjes and D. Ó Cróinín (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010).

Holford-Strevens, L., *The history of time: a very short introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Holford-Strevens, L., *The Oxford companion to the year: an exploration of calendar customs and time reckoning* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Houwen, L.A.J.R. and MacDonald, A.A. (eds), *Beda Venerabilis: historian, monk and Northumbrian* (Groningen: E. Forsten, 1996).

Irshai, O., 'Dating the Eschaton: Jewish and Christian apocalyptic calculations in Late Antiquity', in *Apocalyptic time*, ed. A.I. Baumgarten (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 113–53.

Irvine, M., 'Bede the grammarian and the scope of grammatical studies in eighth-century Northumbria', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 15 (1986), 15–43.

Jones, C.W. (ed.), *Bedae opera de temporibus* (Cambridge, MA: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1943).

Jones, C.W., 'The 'lost' Sirmond manuscript of Bede's computus', *English Historical Review*, 52 (1937), 204–19.

Jones, C.W., 'Two Easter tables', *Speculum*, 13 (1938), 204–5.

Kendall, C.B., 'Bede and education', in *The Cambridge companion to Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 99–112.

Kendall, C.B., 'Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*: the rhetoric of faith', in *Medieval eloquence: studies in the theory and practice of medieval rhetoric*, ed. J.J. Murphy (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1978), 145–72.

Kendall, C.B., 'Modeling conversion: Bede's "anti-Constantinian" narrative of the conversion of King Edwin', in *Conversion to Christianity from Late Antiquity to the Modern Age: considering the process in Europe, Asia, and the Americas*, eds C.B. Kendall, O. Nicholson, W.D. Phillips Jr and M. Ragnow (Minneapolis, MN: Center for Early Modern History, University of Minnesota, 2009), 137–59.

Kennedy, B.H. *The Revised Latin Primer. Edited and further revised by Sir James Mountford*, 76th impression (Harlow: Longman, 2002).

Kirby, D.P., 'Bede and Northumbrian chronology', *English Historical Review*, 78 (1963), 514–27.

Kirby, D.P., 'Bede's native sources for the *Historia ecclesiastica*', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 48 (1966), 341–71.

Kirby, D.P., *Bede's Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum: its contemporary setting* (Jarrow: Jarrow Lecture, 1992); reprinted in *Bede and his world: the Jarrow Lectures 1958–1993*, ed. M. Lapidge (2 vols, Aldershot: Variorum, 1994), II, 903–26.

Knibbs, E., 'Exegetical hagiography: Bede's prose *Vita Sancti Cuthberti*', *Revue Bénédictine*, 114 (2004), 233–52.

Krusch, B., *Studien zur christlich-mittealterlichen Chronologie. Der 84Jährige Ostercyclus und seine Quellen* (Leipzig: Von Veit, 1880).

Kurze, F., 'Die karolingischen Annalen des achten Jahrhunderts', *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für Ältere Deutsche Geschichtskunde*, 25 (1900), 293–315.

Laistner, M.L.W. and King, H.H., *A hand-list of Bede manuscripts* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1943).

Laistner, M.L.W., 'The library of the Venerable Bede', in *Bede, his life, times, and writings*, ed. A.H. Thompson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), 237–66.

Laistner, M.L.W., *Thought and letters in Western Europe*, 2nd edition (London: Methuen, 1957).

Landes, R., 'Lest the Millennium be fulfilled: apocalyptic expectations and the pattern of western chronography, 100–800 CE', in *The use and abuse of eschatology in the Middle Ages*, eds W. Verbeke, D. Verhelst and A. Welkenhuysen (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1988), 137–211.

Lapidge, M., 'Bede's metrical *Vita S. Cuthberti*', in *St. Cuthbert, his cult and his community to AD 1200*, eds G. Bonner, D.W. Rollason and C. Stancliffe

(Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1989), 77–93; reprinted in his *Anglo-Latin literature, 600–899* (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), 339–56.

Lapidge, M., 'Some remnants of Bede's lost *Liber epigrammatum*', *English Historical Review*, 90 (1975), 798–820; reprinted in his *Anglo-Latin literature, 600–899* (London: Hambledon Press, 1996), 357–79.

Lapidge, M., Blair, J., Keynes, S. and Scragg, D. (eds), *The Blackwell encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999).

Lapidge, M., *The Anglo-Saxon library* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Lerner, R.E., 'Refreshment of the saints: the time after Antichrist as a station for early progress in medieval thought', *Traditio*, 32 (1976), 97–144.

Lerner, R.E., 'The medieval return to the thousand-year sabbath', in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, eds R.K. Emmerson and B. McGinn (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 51–71.

Levison, W., 'Bede as historian', in *Bede, his life, times, and writings*, ed. A. Hamilton Thompson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), 111–51.

Lewis, C.T. and Short, C., *A Latin dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1879).

Lewis, D.L., *God's crucible: Islam and the making of Europe, 570 to 1215* (New York, NY; London: W.W. Norton, 2008).

Lobrichon, G., 'Stalking the signs: the apocalyptic commentaries', in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: religious expectation and social change, 950–1050*, eds R. Landes, A.C. Gow and D.C. Van Meter (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003), 67–79.

Love, R., 'The library of the Venerable Bede', in *The history of the book in Britain, vol. I c. 400–1100*, ed. R. Gameson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 606–32.

Luneau, A., *L'Histoire du salut chez les Pères de l'Église: la doctrine des* âges *du monde* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1964).

Lutterkort, K., '*Beda Hagiographicus*: meaning and function of miracle stories in the *Vita Cuthberti* and the *Historia ecclesiastica*', in *Beda Venerabilis: historian, monk and Northumbrian*, eds L.A.J.R. Houwen and A.A. MacDonald (Groningen: E. Forsten, 1996), 81–106.

Lynch, K.M., 'The Venerable Bede's knowledge of Greek', *Traditio*, 39 (1983), 432–9.

Mac Carron, M., 'Bede, *Annus Domini* and the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*', in *The mystery of Christ in the Fathers of the Church: essays in Honour of D. Vincent Twomey SVD*, eds J.E. Rutherford and D. Woods (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2012), 116–34.

Mackay, T.W., 'Augustine and Gregory the Great in Bede's *Commentary on the Apocalypse*', in *Northumbria's golden age*, eds J. Hawkes and S. Mills (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), 396–405.

Mackay, T.W., 'Bede's biblical criticism: the Venerable Bede's summary of Tyconius' *Liber regularum*', in *Saints, scholars, and heroes: Studies in medieval culture in honour of Charles W. Jones*, eds M.H. King and W.M. Stevens (Collegeville, MN: University of Minnesota, 1979), 209–32.

Mackay, T.W., 'Bede's hagiographical method: his knowledge and use of Paulinus of Nola', in *Famulus Christi. Essays in commemoration of the thirteenth centenary of the birth of the Venerable Bede*, ed. G. Bonner (London: SPCK, 1976), 77–92.

Mackay, T.W., 'Sources and style in Bede's *Commentary on the Apocalypse*', in *Studia Patristica, vol. 30: Papers presented at the Twelfth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 1995. Biblica et Apocrypha, ascetica, liturgica*, ed. E.A. Livingstone (Leuven: Peeters, 1997), 54–60.

Magdalino, P., 'The history of the future and its uses: prophecy, policy and propaganda', in *The making of Byzantine History. Studies dedicated to Donald M. Nicol on his seventieth birthday*, eds R. Beaton and C. Roueché (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 1993), 3–34; reprinted with postscript in *The expansion of Orthodox Europe: Byzantium, the Balkans and Russia*, ed. J. Shepard (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 29–64.

Manselli, R., 'L'escatologia di Gregorio Magni', *Ricerche di storia religiosa*, 1 (1954), 72–88.

Markus, R.A., 'Gregory and Bede: the making of the western apocalyptic tradition', *Gregorio Magno nel XIV centenario della morte*, Atti dei convegni Lincei 209 (Rome, Accademia nazionale dei Lincei: 2004), 247–56.

Markus, R.A., 'Living within sight of the end', in *Time in the medieval world*, eds C. Humphrey and W.M. Ormrod (Woodbridge: York Medieval Press, 2001), 23–34.

Markus, R.A., 'The chronology of the Gregorian Mission to England: Bede's narrative and Gregory's correspondence', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 14 (1963), 16–30; reprinted in his *From Augustine to Gregory the Great: history and Christianity in Late Antiquity* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1983), Chapter 10.

Markus, R.A., *Bede and the tradition of ecclesiastical historiography* (Jarrow: Jarrow Lecture, 1975); reprinted in his *From Augustine to Gregory the Great: history and Christianity in Late Antiquity* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1983), Chapter 3; reprinted in *Bede and his world: the Jarrow Lectures 1958–1993*, ed. M. Lapidge (2 vols, Aldershot: Variorum, 1994), I, 385–403.

Markus, R.A., *Gregory the Great and his world* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Marsden, R., *The text of the Old Testament in Anglo-Saxon England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Martin, L.T., 'Bede as a linguistic scholar', *American Benedictine Review*, 35 (1985), 204–14.

Matter, E.A., 'Exegesis of the Apocalypse in the early Middle Ages', in *The Year 1000: religious and social response to the turning of the millennium*, ed. M. Frassetto (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 29–40.

Mayr-Harting, H., 'St Wilfrid in Sussex', in *Studies in Sussex church history*, ed. M.J. Kitch (London: Leopard's Head Press, 1981), 1–17.

Mayr-Harting, H., *The coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd edition (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991).

Mayr-Harting, H., *The Venerable Bede, the Rule of St. Benedict, and social class* (Jarrow: Jarrow Lecture, 1976); reprinted in *Bede and his world: the Jarrow Lectures 1958–1993*, ed. M. Lapidge (2 vols, Aldershot: Variorum, 1994), I, 405–34.

McCarthy, D.P., 'Bede's primary source for the Vulgate chronology in his chronicles in *De temporibus* and *De temporum ratione*', in *Computus and its cultural context in the Latin West, AD 300–1200: proceedings of the 1st International Conference on the Science of Computus in Ireland and Europe, Galway, 14–16 July, 2006*, eds I. Warntjes and D. Ó Cróinín (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 159–89.

McCarthy, D.P., 'The emergence of *anno domini*', in *Time and eternity: the medieval discourse*, eds G. Jaritz and G. Moreno-Riaño (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 31–53.

McCready, W.D., *Miracles and the Venerable Bede* (Toronto, ON: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1994).

McGinn, B., 'Introduction: John's Apocalypse and the apocalyptic mentality', in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, eds R.K. Emmerson and B. McGinn (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), 3–19.

McGinn, B., *Visions of the End: apocalyptic traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1979).

McKitterick, R., *Perceptions of the Past in the Early Middle Ages* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006).

Meyvaert, P., "In the footsteps of the Fathers': the date of Bede's *Thirty questions on the Book of Kings* to Nothelm', in *The limits of Ancient Christianity: essays on Late Antique thought and culture in honour of R.A. Markus*, eds W.E. Klingshirn and M. Vessey (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan

Press, 1997), 267–86; reprinted in his *The Art of words: Bede and Theodulf* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2008), Chapter 3.

Meyvaert, P., 'The date of Bede's *In Ezram* and his image of Ezra in the *Codex Amiatinus*', *Speculum*, 80 (2005), 1087–133; reprinted in his *The Art of words: Bede and Theodulf* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2008), Chapter 6.

Meyvaert, P., 'The *Registrum* of Gregory the Great and Bede', *Revue Bénédictine*, 80 (1970), 162–6; reprinted in his *Benedict, Gregory, Bede and others* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1977), Chapter 11.

Michelli, P., 'What's in the cupboard? Ezra and Matthew reconsidered', in *Northumbria's golden age*, eds J. Hawkes and S. Mills (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), 345–58.

Möhring, H., *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit. Entstehung, Wandel und Wirkung einer tausendjährigen Weissagung* (Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2000).

Mommsen, T., 'Zur Weltchronik vom J. 741', *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für* Ältere *Deutsche Geschichtskunde*, 22 (1897), 548–53.

Mosshammer, A.A., *The Easter computus and the origins of the Christian era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Murray, A., 'Bede and the unchosen race', in *Power and identity in the Middle Ages. Essays in memory of Rees Davies*, eds H. Pryce and J. Watts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 52–67.

Nothaft, C.P.E., 'An eleventh-century chronologer at work: Marianus Scottus and the quest for the missing 22 Years', *Speculum*, 88 (2013), 457–82.

Nothaft, C.P.E., *Dating the Passion: the life of Jesus and the emergence of scientific chronology (200–1600)* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

Ó Carragáin, É. and Thacker, A.T., 'Wilfrid in Rome', in *Wilfrid: abbot, bishop, saint, papers from the 1300th anniversary conferences*, ed. N.J. Higham (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2013), 212–30.

Ó Carragáin, É*., Ritual and the rood: liturgical images and the Old English poems of the Dream of the Rood tradition* (London: The British Library and University of Toronto Press, 2005).

Ó Cróinín, D., ''New heresy for old': Pelagianism in Ireland and the Papal Letter of 640', *Speculum*, 60 (1985), 505–16; reprinted in his *Early Irish history and chronology* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), 87–98.

Ó Cróinín, D., 'Bede's Irish computus', in *Early Irish history and chronology*, ed. D. Ó Cróinín (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), 201–24.

Ó Cróinín, D., 'Rath Melsigi, Willibrord, and the earliest Echternach manuscripts', *Peritia*, 3 (1984), 17–49; reprinted in his *Early Irish history and chronology* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), 145–72.

Ó Cróinín, D., 'The date, provenance and earliest use of the works of Virgilius Maro Grammaticus', in *Tradition und Wertung: Festschrift für Franz Brunhölzl*, eds G. Bernt, F. Rädle and G. Silagi (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke, 1989), 13–22; reprinted in his *Early Irish history and chronology* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), 191–200.

Ó Cróinín, D., 'The Irish provenance of Bede's computus', *Peritia*, 2 (1983), 229–47; reprinted in his *Early Irish history and chronology* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), 173–90.

O'Loughlin, T., *Adomnán and the holy places: the perceptions of an insular monk on the locations of the biblical drama* (London; New York, NY: T and T Clark, 2007).

O'Reilly, J., ''Know who and what he is': the context and inscriptions of the Durham Gospels Crucifixion image', in *Making and Meaning in Insular Art: proceedings of the fifth International Conference on Insular Art held at Trinity College Dublin, 25–28 August 2005*, ed. R. Moss (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), 301–16.

O'Reilly, J., 'Introduction', in *Bede: On the Temple*, ed. S. Connolly (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1995), xvii–lv.

O'Reilly, J., 'The library of Scripture: views from Vivarium and Wearmouth-Jarrow', in *New offerings, ancient treasures: studies in medieval art for George Henderson*, eds P. Binski and W. Noel (Stroud: Sutton, 2001), 3–39.

Ohashi, M., 'The Easter Table of Victorius of Aquitaine in Early Medieval England', in *The Easter controversy of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages: its manuscripts, texts, and tables*, eds I. Warntjes and D. Ó Cróinín (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 137–49.

Ohashi, M., 'Theory and history: an interpretation of the Paschal Controversy in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica*', in *Bède le Vénérable entre tradition et postérité / The Venerable Bede: Tradition and posterity*, eds S. Lebecq, M. Perrin and O. Szerwiniack (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Centre de gestion de l'édition scientifique, Université Charles-de-Gaulle – Lille III, 2005), 177–85.

Orlandi, G., 'Metrical and rhythmical clausulae in Medieval Latin prose: some aspects and problems', in *Aspects of the language of Latin prose*, eds T. Reinhardt, M. Lapidge and J. Adams (Oxford: The British Academy, 2005), 395–412.

Palmer, J.T., 'Calculating time and the end of time in the Carolingian world, c.740–820', *English Historical Review*, 126 (2011), 1309–31.

Palmer, J.T., 'Computus after the Paschal Controversy of AD 740', in *The Easter controversy of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages: its manuscripts, texts,*

and tables, eds I. Warntjes and D. Ó Cróinín (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 213–41.

Palmer, J.T., 'The ordering of time', in *Abendländische Apokalyptik. Kompendium zur Genealogie der Endzeit*, eds V. Wieser, C. Zolles, C. Feik, M. Zolles and L. Schlöndorff (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2013), 605–18.

Palmer, J.T., *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

Parkes, M.B., *The scriptorium of Wearmouth-Jarrow* (Jarrow: Jarrow Lecture, 1982); reprinted in *Bede and his world: the Jarrow Lectures 1958–1993*, ed. M. Lapidge (2 vols, Aldershot: Variorum, 1994), II, 555–86.

Pelteret, D.A.E., 'Saint Wilfrid: tribal bishop, civic bishop or Germanic lord?' in *The community, the family and the saint: patterns of power in Early Medieval Europe*, eds J. Hill and M. Swan (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998), 159–80.

Pelteret, D.A.E., 'The issue of apostolic authority at the Synod of Whitby', in *The Easter controversy of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages: its manuscripts, texts, and tables*, eds I. Warntjes and D. Ó Cróinín (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 150–72.

Rabin, A., 'Historical re-collections: rewriting the world chronicle in Bede's *De temporum ratione*', *Viator*, 36 (2005), 23–39.

Ray, R., *Bede, rhetoric, and the creation of Christian Latin culture* (Jarrow: Jarrow Lecture, 1997).

Ray, R., 'Who did Bede think he was?' in *Innovation and tradition in the writings of the Venerable Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2006), 11–36.

Rowley, S., 'Reassessing exegetical interpretations of Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*', *Literature and Theology*, 17 (2003), 227–43.

Said, E.W., *Orientalism*, 25th anniversary edition (London and New York, NY: Penguin, 2003).

Scarfe Beckett, K., *Anglo-Saxon perceptions of the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Scheil, A.P., *The footsteps of Israel: understanding Jews in Anglo-Saxon England* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2004).

Schmidt, R., '"Aetates mundi". die Weltalter als Gliederungsprinzip der Geschichte', *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 67 (1955–56), 288–317.

Schuster, M.F., 'Bede and the sparrow simile', *American Benedictine Review*, 8 (1957), 46–50.

Scully, D., '"Proud ocean has become a servant": a classical topos in the literature of Britain's conquest and conversion', in *'Listen, O Isles, unto me': studies in*

medieval word and image in honour of Jennifer O'Reilly, eds E. Mullins and D. Scully (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011), 3–15.

Sears, E., *The Ages of man: medieval interpretations of the life cycle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986).

Shanzer, D., 'Bede's style: a neglected historiographical model for the style of the *Historia ecclesiastica*?' in *Source of wisdom: Old English and early medieval Latin studies in honour of Thomas D. Hill*, eds C.D. Wright, F.M. Biggs and T.N. Hall (Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 329–52.

Sharf, A., *Byzantine Jewry: from Justinian to the Fourth Crusade* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971).

Sharpe, R., 'The varieties of Bede's prose', in *Aspects of the language of Latin prose*, eds T. Reinhardt, M. Lapidge and J.N. Adams (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 339–55.

Siemens, J., 'Christ's restoration of Humankind in the *Laterculus Malalianus*, 14', *Heythrop Journal*, 48 (2007), 18–28.

Siemens, J., *The Christology of Theodore of Tarsus: the Laterculus Malalianus and the person and work of Christ* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010).

Sims-Williams, P., *Religion and literature in western England, 600–800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

Siniscalco, P., 'Le età del mondo in Beda', *Romanobarbarica*, 3 (1978), 297–331.

Southern, R.W., *Western views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962).

Stancliffe, C., 'Dating Wilfrid's death and Stephen's *Life*', in *Wilfrid: abbot, bishop, saint, papers from the 1300th anniversary conferences*, ed. N.J. Higham (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2013), 17–26.

Stancliffe, C., *Bede and the Britons*, 2005 Whithorn Lecture (Stranraer: Friends of the Whithorn Trust, 2007).

Stevens, W.M., 'Fulda scribes at work: Bodleian Library Manuscript Canonici Miscellaneous 353', *Bibliothek und Wissenschaft*, 8 (1982), 287–316; reprinted in his *Cycles of time and scientific learning in Medieval Europe* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1995), Chapter 6.

Stevenson, J., 'Theodore and the *Laterculus Malalianus*', in *Archbishop Theodore: commemorative studies on his life and influence*, ed. M. Lapidge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 204–21.

Stevenson, J., *The 'Laterculus Malalianus' and the school of Archbishop Theodore* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Story, J., 'Bede, Willibrord and the letters of Pope Honorius I on the genesis of the archbishopric of York', *English Historical Review*, 127 (2012), 783–818.

Thacker, A.T., 'Bede and his martyrology', in *'Listen, O Isles, unto me': studies in medieval word and image in honour of Jennifer O'Reilly*, eds E. Mullins and D. Scully (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011), 126–41.

Thacker, A.T., 'Bede and the ordering of understanding', in *Innovation and tradition in the writings of the Venerable Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2006), 37–63.

Thacker, A.T., 'Bede, the Britons and the Book of Samuel', in *Early Medieval studies in memory of Patrick Wormald*, eds S.D. Baxter, C.E. Karkov, J.L. Nelson and D.A.E. Pelteret (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 129–47.

Thacker, A.T., 'Bede's ideal of reform', in *Ideal and reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon society: studies presented to J.M. Wallace-Hadrill*, eds P. Wormald, D. Bullough and R. Collins (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 130–53.

Thacker, A.T., 'Monks, preaching and pastoral care in early Anglo-Saxon England', in *Pastoral care before the parish*, eds J. Blair and R. Sharpe (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992), 137–70.

Thacker, A.T., 'Wilfrid, his cult and his biographer', in *Wilfrid: abbot, bishop, saint, papers from the 1300th anniversary conferences*, ed. N.J. Higham (Donington: Shaun Tyas, 2013), 1–16.

Thacker, A.T., *Bede and Augustine of Hippo: history and figure in sacred text* (Jarrow: Jarrow Lecture, 2005).

Thompson, A.H. (ed.), *Bede, his life, times, and writings. Essays in commemoration of the twelfth centenary of his death* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935).

Tristram, H.L.C., *Sex aetates mundi: die Weltzeitalter bei den Angelsachsen und den Iren: Untersuchungen und Texte* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1985).

Troncarelli, F., 'Il consolato dell'anticristo', *Studi medievali ser. 3*, 30 (1989), 567–92.

Van der Walt, A.G.P., 'Reflections on the Benedictine Rule in Bede's Homiliary', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 37 (1968), 367–76.

van Euw, A., 'Beda Venerabilis: Naturlehre, historiographische und zeitrechnerische Werke (Dom Hs. 103)', in *Glaube und Wissen im Mittelalter. Die Kölner Dombibliothek*, eds J. Plotzek and U. Surmann (Munich: Hirmer, 1998), 29–135.

Verbist, P., *Duelling with the past: medieval authors and the problem of the Christian era, c. 990–1135* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010).

Vercruysse, J-M., 'Bède lecteur de Tyconius dans l'Expositio Apocalypseos', in *Bède le Vénérable entre tradition et postérité / The Venerable Bede: Tradition and posterity*, eds S. Lebecq, M. Perrin and O. Szerwiniack (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Centre de gestion de l'édition scientifique, Université Charles-de-Gaulle – Lille III, 2005), 19–30.

Waitz, G.H., 'Zur Geschichtschreibung der Karolingischen Zeit', *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für Ältere Deutsche Geschichtskunde*, 5 (1880), 475–502.

Wallace-Hadrill, J.M., *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People. A historical commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

Wallace-Hadrill, J.M., *Bede's Europe* (Jarrow: Jarrow Lecture, 1962); reprinted in *Bede and his world: the Jarrow Lectures 1958–1993*, ed. M. Lapidge (2 vols, Aldershot: Variorum, 1994), I, 70–113.

Wallis, F., 'Bede and science', in *The Cambridge companion to Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 113–26.

Wallis, F., '*Si naturam quaeras*: re-framing Bede's science', in *Innovation and tradition in the writings of the Venerable Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia University Press, 2006), 65–100.

Ward, B., *The Venerable Bede* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1990).

Warntjes, I., 'A newly discovered prologue of AD 699 to the Easter table of Victorius of Aquitaine in an unknown Sirmond manuscript', *Peritia*, 21 (2010), 255–84.

Warntjes, I., 'Köln als naturwissenschaftliches Zentrum in der Karolingerzeit: Die frühmittelalterliche Kölner Schule und der Beginn der fränkischen Komputistik', in *Mittelalterliche Handschriften der Kölner Dombibliothek*, eds H. Finger and H. Horst (Cologne: Erzbischöfliche Diözesan- und Dombibliothek Köln, 2012), 41–96.

Warntjes, I., 'The *argumenta* of Dionysius Exiguus and their early recensions', in *Computus and its cultural context in the Latin West, AD 300–1200: proceedings of the 1st International Conference on the Science of Computus in Ireland and Europe, Galway, 14–16 July, 2006*, eds I. Warntjes and D. Ó Cróinín (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010), 40–111.

Westgard, J., 'Bede and the Continent in the Carolingian Age and beyond', in *The Cambridge companion to Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 201–15.

Westgard, J.A., 'New manuscripts of Bede's letter to Albinus', *Revue Bénédictine*, 120 (2010), 208–15.

Whitelock, D., 'Bede his teachers and friends', in *Famulus Christi. Essays in commemoration of the thirteenth centenary of the birth of the Venerable Bede*, ed. G. Bonner (London: SPCK, 1976), 19–39.

Wilkinson, L.P., *Golden Latin Artistry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

Wood, I.N., 'Constantinian crosses in Northumbria', in *The place of the cross in Anglo-Saxon England*, eds C.E. Karkov, S.L. Keefer and K.L. Jolly (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), 3–13.

Wood, I.N., 'The foundation of Bede's Wearmouth-Jarrow', in *The Cambridge companion to Bede*, ed. S. DeGregorio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 84–96.

Wood, I.N., 'The gifts of Wearmouth and Jarrow', in *The languages of gift in the Early Middle Ages*, eds W. Davies and P. Fouracre (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 89–115.

Wood, I.N., *The origins of Jarrow; the monastery, the slake and Ecgfrith's minster*, Bede's World Studies 1 (Jarrow: Bede's World Museum, 2008).

Wood, S., 'Bede's Northumbrian dates again', *English Historical Review*, 98 (1983), 280–96.

Wormald, P., 'Æthelwold and his continental counterparts: contact, comparison, contrast', in *Bishop Æthelwold: his career and influence*, ed. B. Yorke (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1988), 13–42.

Wright, N., 'The metrical art(s) of Bede', in *Latin learning and English lore: studies in Anglo-Saxon literature for Michael Lapidge*, eds K. O'Brien O'Keeffe and A. Orchard (2 vols, Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press, 2005), I, 149–70.

Yorke, B., *Rex doctissimus: Bede and King Aldfrith of Northumbria* (Jarrow: Jarrow Lecture, 2009).

This page has been left blank intentionally

Index

Abraham, Old Testament patriarch 95–6, 109–10
Acca, bishop of Hexham (r. 710–731) 10–12, 18, 23, 26–9, 32, 40, 43–4, 63–4
Acephalite heresy 52
Acircius *see* Aldfrith
Adbreviatio chronicae 156–7
Adomnán, abbot of Iona (d. 704) 5, 97–100
Æthelbald, king of the Mercians (716–757) 12, 108
Æthelberg, abbess of Barking (d. *c.* 686/8) 199
Æthelberht, king of Kent (r. *c.* 560–616) 172, 189, 202
Æthelfrith, king of the Northumbrians (r. *c.* 593–616) 172, 183, 194
Æthelred, king of the Mercians (r. 675–704) 173
Agatho, pope (r. 678–681) 69, 171
ages of the world 10, 30–1, 130, 165
  6 Ages schema 10, 24–5, 38, 126–32
  Fifth Age 129–32
  Sixth Age 10, 16, 29–31, 35, 38, 55, 109–10, 146, 165–7
  Seventh Age 11n36
  Aidan, bishop of Lindisfarne (d. 651) 174–6, 202, 220
Albinus, abbot SS Peter and Paul, Canterbury (r. 709/710–*c.* 733) 18, 124
Alcuin, abbot of Tours (*c.* 735–804) 150, 217–18
Aldhelm, abbot of Malmesbury and bishop of Sherborne (*c.* 639–709) 54
Aldfrith, king of the Northumbrians (r. 684–704/705) 70, 79, 81, 90, 98, 173, 216
Ambrose, bishop of Milan (*c.* 340–397) 64
Ammonites 101
Annales S. Maximiniani 155
Annus Domini chronology 18–19, 123, 140, 143, 161–79
Annus mundi chronology 9–10, 16, 123, 127–9, 140, 143, 162, 165, 167; *see also* End of time – AM 6000
Annus Passionis chronology 19, 162, 164, 167–8
Antichrist and 'antichrists' 33, 35, 37–39, 118, 120–2, 130, 134–6, 147
apocalypticism and apocalyptic anxiety 9, 41–3, 118–19, 147, 166; *see also* End of the world
Appolonarius of Leodicea (d. *c.* 390) 130
Arius and Arian heresy 49, 50, 56, 57, 64, 104
Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria (*c.*296/298 – 373) 57, 64
Augustine, archbishop of Canterbury (d. 604) 194, 214
Augustine, bishop of Hippo (d. 430) 39, 42, 107–8, 118–21, 139, 144, 149, 169–70, 203
  invoked as authority by Bede 25, 27, 31, 32, 34, 35, 41–42, 55, 147, 192, 199–200

Babel/Babylon 190–1
Bede, monk and priest of Wearmouth-Jarrow (d. 735)
  accused of heresy 7, 9–10, 28–33, 40, 55, 127, 144, 165

attitudes to prosperity and adversity 181–205
autobiographical account of life and works 9, 173
biblical commentaries 3, 10–11, 23–4, 56, 170–1, 223–31; *see also individual commentaries below*
and Bible 126–7
biography 4–21
and the British 177, 183
and end-times 3, 10, 15–16, 23–45, 50, 115–50, 167
exegetical style 25–6, 103–4
and Greek 17
and heresy 3, 13, 37–8, 47–66, 104
and the Irish 202
and Islam 3, 15, 93–114
and Jerusalem 98–9
and the Jews 50, 110, 132–4
literary style 71, 73–5, 77–8
and miracles 1, 174
ordination 6–7
pastoral theology 209–13
reception, in Carolingian period 16, 139, 150–60
and reform 3, 20–1, 62–5, 198, 207–32
and time 8, 146–7, 149
writings
Chronica maiora (i.e. *De temporum ratione* ch. 66) 2, 15, 16, 51, 105–8, 122, 126–9, 141, 146–7, 162, 164–5, 176–7, 192
Chronica minora (i.e. *De temporibus*, *De temporibus* ch. 22) 2, 8, 9, 10, 30, 127–8, 162, 165
Collectio ex opusculis sancti Augustini in Epistulas Pauli apostoli 199–200
De arte metrica 6
De eo quod ait Isaias 11–12, 32, 193
De locis sanctis 98–101
De mansionibus filiorum Israel 11
De natura rerum 8, 25, 142
De schematibus et tropis 6
De tabernaculo 24, 110, 170, 201, 203, 225–6
De templo 18, 24, 29, 190, 196–8, 204, 225–6
De temporibus 7–8, 12, 17, 29–30, 40, 116, 127, 142, 162–3, 166
De temporum ratione 7, 14–17, 40, 44, 51, 53, 105–8, 115–60, 162, 164, 167, 176–7
Laon-Metz glosses on 141, 157–8
manuscripts of 150–9
Epistula ad Ecgbertum 20–1, 62, 64, 67–8, 79, 88–91, 182, 202, 207–32
Epistula ad Helmuualdum 14
Epistola ad Pleguinam 9–10, 28–33, 40–2, 55, 127, 139, 144, 165–6
Expositio Actuum Apostolorum 11, 17, 26–8, 31–2, 44, 101–2, 170
Expositio Apocalypseos 8, 9, 23–45, 139, 142, 147–8, 224
Expositio in Canticum Abacuc prophetae 194–5, 198
Historia abbatum 1, 13–4, 67–92, 163
Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum 1–2, 7, 18–20, 52–3, 61, 68, 110–11, 122–6, 140, 161–2, 164, 166–7, 171–9, 181–4, 186–8, 192–6, 202–4, 218–23
Hymni 29
In Cantica canticorum 48, 53–5, 60–1, 102
In epistulas septem catholicas 11, 27, 32–3, 48n11, 56, 191–4
In Ezram et Neemiam 18, 49–50, 55–6, 59, 61–6, 195, 198, 201, 225–31
In Genesim 6, 15, 99, 105, 109–10, 184, 190–1, 194, 196–9
In Lucae euangelium expositio 11, 27–8, 185, 192

In Marci euangelium expositio 17, 184–5, 187, 201
In primam partem Samuhelis 7, 12–13, 29, 48n13, 49, 50, 56–61, 66, 84, 102, 170, 187–8, 200, 224–5
In Proverbia Salomonis 60–1
In Regum librum XXX Quaestiones 193, 224
Passio S. Anastasii 1
Retractatio in Actus Apostolorum 17
Vita et miracula Cuthberti prosa 1, 3, 13, 80, 125n33, 219
Vita et miracula Cuthberti metrica 82, 125n33
Vita S. Felicis 1
Beast, number of (666) in Revelation 13.18 39
Benedict Biscop, abbot of Wearmouth-Jarrow (d. 689) 4–5, 14, 51, 67–85, 96–7
Berhtwold, archbishop of Canterbury (r. 693–731) 173
Bible *Indexed are passages whose content or treatment by Bede receive significant discussion*
Gen. 16:12 97, 102, 105, 109
Gen. 21.10–18 109
1 Sam. 25:1 103–4
Dan. 9:24–7 129–32
Dan. 12:11–12 134–5, 137, 147
Amos 5.25 101
Malachi 4.5–6 133
Acts 2.11 101
Acts 7.43 101
2 Cor. 12.9 199
Gal. 4.30 103
Phil. 2.6–8 168–9
2 Peter 3.8 31
1 John 2.18 32–33, 43
Rev. 11.3 133–4, 137
Rev. 13.5 134, 137
Rev. 20.7 43
See also: Chronology – discrepancy between Septuagint and Vulgate
Blair, John 91
Boniface, missionary and archbishop of Mainz (*c.* 675–754) 108
Boniface V, pope (r. 619–25) 172
Britons and British kingdoms 80

Cædmon, monk and poet (7th c.) 220–3
Cædwalla, king of the West Saxons (*c.* 659–689) 173
Caesar, Julius (100–44 BCE) 167
Caesarius, bishop of Arles (d. 572) 25
Calcedon, Council of (451) 169
Campbell, James 219–20
Carroll, M.T.A. 186, 198
Carthage 106–7
Cassiodorus (*c.* 485–*c.* 585) 169
Cedd, bishop of London (*c.* 620–664) 202
Cenred, king of the Northumbrians (r. 716–718) 12, 79, 173, 193
Ceolfrith, abbot of Wearmouth-Jarrow (d. 716) 4–5, 7, 12, 14, 53, 56, 60, 75, 81–7, 90, 98, 102, 163, 202
anonymous *Vita Ceolfridi* 67–8, 76, 79, 81, 85–7
Ceolwulf, king of the Northumbrians (r. 729–737) 18, 20, 63, 79, 112, 216
Chad, bishop of the Mercians (d. 672) 196
Chambers, R.W. 218
Charlemagne, king of the Franks and Emperor (*c.* 742/8 – 814) 150, 156
Christology 19, 161–179; *see also* Arius and Arian heresy, Monophysite heresy, Monothelite heresy
'Chronicle of 741' 155–6, 160
chronology 15, 24–5, 128–32, 140, 143, 146–7, 154, 161–79
discrepancy between Septuagint and Vulgate 10, 29–30, 127–8, 140, 144–5, 153, 155, 165
see also Ages of the World, Annus Domini, Annus Mundi, Bede's writings *De temporibus* and *De temporum ratione*
Clofesho, synod of (747) 218
Coifi, pagan priest 186–9

Coldingham, monastery of 196, 216, 223
Colgrave, Bertram 161
Colman, abbot of Lindisfarne and Mayo (d. 676) 221
Cologne Prologue (*c.* 395) 41
Columba, abbot of Iona (521–97) 175
comets 110–13, 173
computus see Easter, Paschal cycles and tables, ages of the world, and Bede's writings *De temporibus* and *De temporum ratione*
Constantinople
  Arab seige of 107
  Sixth Ecumenical Council of (680–1) 171
Cubitt, Catherine 216
Cuthbert, author of *Epistola Cuthberti de obitu Bedae* 7
Cyprian, bishop of Carthage (d. 258) 192

Daniel, bishop of the West Saxons (d. 745) 124–5
Darby, Peter 166, 182
David, king of the Jews 28–9, 29n13, 59–60, 188
DeGregorio, Scott 56, 62, 202
De duobus testibus 35n26
De ratione conputandi 148
Desastan, battle of (603) 172
Diocletian, emperor (245–311) 163
Dionysius Exiguus (*fl. c.* 532) 18, 142–3, 145–6, 155, 163–4, 167–8, 170
Dryhthelm, monk of Melrose (*c.* 700) 193, 196

Eadbald, king of Kent (r. 616–640) 173, 194
Eadberht, king of the Northumbrians (r. 737–58; d. 768) 63, 217
Eadwulf, king of the Northumbrians (r. 704–5) 79, 81
Eanflæd, queen of the Northumbrians (626– *c.* 685) 176, 178
earthquakes 39
East Saxons 195
Easter 8, 14, 16, 18–19, 30, 53–4, 65–6, 174–8; *see also* Paschal cycles and tables
Ecgberht, bishop (732–735) and archbishop (735–766) of York 20–21, 63–4, 207–32
Ecgberht, priest and missionary (d. 729) 19, 112, 142, 164, 173, 176–8, 202
Ecgfrith, king of the Northumbrians (r. 670–685) 5, 79, 81, 163, 173, 194
eclipses 39n38, 173
Edwin, king of the Northumbrians (*c.* 586–632/3) 172–4, 183, 189
end of the world 16, 30–3, 50, 110, 115–22, 132–8
  expected in AM 6000 9, 10, 24–5, 40–3, 140–4, 165, 167
  expected in AM 7000 41–2, 144–5, 167
  see also apocalypticism, Last Judgement, millennium
Enoch and Elijah ("two witnesses" of Rev. 11) 35, 38, 120–1, 130, 132–4
Eormenburg, queen of the Northumbrians 80
Ephesus, Council of (431) 168, 170
Esi, abbot 125
Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea (*c.* 260–*c.* 340) 25, 64, 126, 128–9, 156, 164
Eutyches (*c.* 380–*c.* 456) 52, 65

Felix of Squillace (*fl.* 616) 143
Foot, Sarah 91
Forthred, abbot 217
Frankish kingdom (Francia) 150–9
Fursa, Irish monk and hermit (d. 650) 193, 196

Germanus, bp. of Auxerre (*c.* 378–*c.* 448) 52, 192, 199, 201
Gildas, British historian (*c.* 500–570) 126, 183, 196
gnosticism 24

Gregory I, pope (*c.* 540–604) 25, 39, 121–2, 139, 169, 172, 191–2, 199, 202, 209, 214–15
  mission to English 171–2
Gregory, bishop of Tours (*c.* 538–94) 126

Hadrian, abbot of SS Peter and Paul, Canterbury (d. 710) 42, 96–7, 145
Hagar, mother of Ishmael 95–6, 109–10
Hatfield, synod of 51, 171
heresy *see* Bede and heresy *and particular heresies e.g.* Arius and Arianism
Hertford, synod of 173
Higham, N.J. 80, 192, 219–20
Hilarianus, Quintus Julius (*fl c.* 395) 41, 43
Hilary, bishop of Poitiers (*c.* 300 – *c.* 368) 64
Hild, abbess of Whitby (*c.* 614–80) 173, 199
Hildelith, abbess of Barking (early 8th c.) 221–2
Hlothere, king of Kent (r. 673–85) 173
Holder, Arthur 54–5, 60–1
Honorius I, pope (r. 625–38) 172, 175, 177, 214
Honorius, archbishop of Canterbury (r. 627–53) 172–4
Hwætberht *alias* Eusebius, abbot of Wearmouth-Jarrow (716– *c.* 747) 10, 26–7, 43, 102, 115

Incarnation of Jesus Christ 19, 165–6, 168–71
  inaugurates Sixth Age of the world 29–31
Innovation and Tradition in the Writings of the Venerable Bede 2
Iona, monastery of 19, 142, 164, 173, 175–8
Ireland and the Irish 52–4, 166, 173, 175, 177–8, 202
Irenaeus, bishop of Lyon (d. *c.* 193–202) 24, 142
Ishmael, son of patriarch Abraham 96–7, 99, 105, 109–10, 113
Isidore, bishop of Seville (*c.* 560 – 636) 95–6, 153, 156

James the Deacon (d. after 671) 176
Jarrow, monastery of St Paul 4, 69, 86–8; *see also* Wearmouth-Jarrow
Jerome (*c.* 347–*c.* 420) 9, 24–5, 37, 39, 95–7, 105, 118–19, 122, 130–1, 135–6, 147, 162
Jews, expected conversion of at end of time 35, 50, 110, 121, 132–4, 147; *see also* Bede and the Jews
John IV, pope (r. 640–2) 53, 175
John, archchanter of St Peter's, Rome 51
John of Beverley, bishop of Hexham and York (d. 721) 173
Jones, C. W. 141, 150–1
Josephus, Jewish historian (37– *c.* 100) 128–9, 131
Joshua, Old Testament judge 128–9
Julian, bishop of Eclanum (*c.* 386–*c.* 455) 53–5
Julius Africanus (*fl.* late 2nd–early 2rd c.) 129, 131–2
Justinian II, emperor (669–711) 106–7, 156
Justus, archbishop of Canterbury (d. 627/31) 172, 175

"Karlsruhe Bede" *see* manuscripts–Karlsruhe Aug. perg. 167

Landes, Richard 140
Last Judgement 12, 117, 119, 140
Lastingham, monastery of 125, 221
Laurence, archbishop of Canterbury (r. 604–19) 175, 178
Leo I, pope (*c.* 400–461) 169
Lindisfarne, monastery of 125
Latercus Malalianus 42, 145
Liber Pontificalis 106, 126
Liutprand, king of the Lombards (f. 712–44) 108

Magdalino, Paul 118
Manicheanism 56
manuscripts
Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Phill. 1831 151n51, 153n59, 155n68, 156n74
Besançon 186 155n68
Cologne Dombibliothek 83ii 152n56, 154n62 and 65
Cologne Dombibiothek 102 157n80
Cologne Dombibliothek 103 157n79
Karlsruhe Aug. perg. 167 152n57, 153–4, 153n58 and 61, 154n64, 160
Leiden Scaliger 28 153n59
London BL Add. 1930 156n74
London BL Cotton Caligula A xv 143n13
London BL Cotton Vespasian B vi 156n75
London BL Harley 3017 152n56
London BL Harley 3091 151n52
Munich CLM 246 156n72
Paris BNF nouv. acq. lat. 1612 151n52, 152
Paris BNF nouv. acq. lat. 1613 154n63
Paris BNF nouv. acq. lat. 1615 153n59, 155n68, 156n77
Paris BNF nouv. acq. lat. 1632 151n53, 157n80, 158n84
Paris BNF lat. 4860 156–7n77, 158n82
Paris BNF lat. 4871 158n83
Paris BNF lat. 5543 150n49, 157n78
Paris BNF lat. 7296 151n54
Paris BNF lat. 10837 143n13
St Gall 248 152n57
St Gall 251 151n51, 152n57, 153n59, 154n66
St Gall 459 152
St Gall 902 154n66
Valenciennes 343 153n58
Vatican Ottob. 67 151n51, 153n59
Vatican Pal. lat. 1448 152n56, 153n62, 154n66
Vatican Pal. lat. 1449 151n53
Würzburg M. p. th. f. 46 153n59
Markus, R.A. 182
Marianus Scottus, chronographer (1028–1082/3) 157–8
Martin I, pope (r. 649–653) 51
Mary, Blessed Virgin 169–70
Maurice, emperor (539–602) 172
Mavias, King *see* Mu'awiya I
Mellitus, archbishop of Canterbury (d. 624) 172, 175
Methodius, pseudo- 158
millennium (i.e. 1000-year reign of the saints, Rev. 20.4) 24, 118, 140, 147–8
Monophysite heresy 52, 168, 171
Monotheletist heresy 51–2, 65, 171
Mosshammer, Alden 163
Mu'awiya I, Umayyad caliph (r. 661–80) 99–101
Munich Computus 148

Nechtan, king of the Picts (r. 706–42) 53
Nechtansmere, battle of (685) 79–80
Nestorian heresy 168
Nicaea, council of (325) 57
Northumbria, kingdom and church of 5, 56, 62–5, 67–92, 174–8, 181–205, 207–32
Nothhelm, priest of London and archbishop of Canterbury (735–739) 18, 124

Ó Cróinín, Dáibhí 53, 166
Osred, king of the Northumbrians (r. 705–16) 12, 60, 79, 81, 82, 173
Osric, king of the Northumbrians (r. 718–29) 112
Oswald, king of the Northumbrians (r. 634–643) 174, 176, 183, 189, 202
Oswiu, king of the Northumbrians (*c.* 612–70) 174–6, 183, 202
Owine, monk of Lastingham 221

Paschal cycle and tables 19, 53–4, 142–3, 145, 155, 161–4, 167–8, 170, 172, 177; *see also* Easter

Paulinus, bishop of York (d. 644) 172–4, 176, 188, 192, 214
Pelagius and Pelagian heresy 52–4, 56, 64–5, 202
Penda, king of the Mercians (d. 655) 174, 183
Persian Empire 104–5
Phocas, emperor (547–610) 172
Picts 14, 142, 202
Pippin II, mayor of the Palace of Francia (d. 714) 156
plague 4
Plummer, Charles 47, 54, 186–7
Poitiers, battle of (732/3) 111–12
Primasius, bishop of Hadrumentum (d. *c.* 558) 25, 39–40
Prosper of Aquitaine (*c.* 390–*c.* 455) 162

Quartodecimanism 53

Rath Melsigi, monastery of 143
'refreshment of the saints' (Rev. 8:1) 37
Roman Empire 136–7

Said, Edward 93
Samaritans 64–5
'Saracens' 94–114
Sarah, wife of patriarch Abraham 95–6, 103–4, 109–10
Sardinia, Arab raids on 107–8
Saul, king of the Jews 188–9
Sergius I, pope (r. 687–701) 69
Seventy Prophetic Weeks 129–32
Sicily, Arab raids on 106
Sirmond group of manuscripts 166
Spain, Arab conquest of 102, 105, 108
Stephen, protomartyr 193
Stephen of Ripon, author of *Vita Wilfridi* 63, 142
St Albans, church of 183
St Gall, monastery of 152, 154

Thacker, Alan 202, 211, 219
Theodore, archbishop of Canterbury (r. 668–690) 42, 51, 95–6, 145, 173, 221
Theodore of Pharan (d. *c.* 630) 51
Tours 152, 154
Trier 154
Tyconius, Donatist exegete (*fl. c.* 370–390) 9, 25, 34–36, 39–40, 147–9

Victorinus, bishop of Pettau (d. 304) 24
Victorius of Aquitaine, computist (*fl.* 457) 19, 142–3, 145–6, 155, 162, 167–8
Virgil (70–19 BCE) 189

Wearmouth, monastery of St Peter 69, 163
Wearmouth-Jarrow, monastery 4–6, 13–14, 67–92
  governance 75–8
  library 4, 41, 74–5
  rule 72–4
  see also Jarrow, Wearmouth
Weltenburg 156
Whitby, 'synod' of (664) 30, 141, 173–4, 176–7, 202
Wihtred, king of Kent (r. 690/1–725) 173
Wilfred, bishop of Northumbria (*c.* 663–710) 28–30, 40, 55, 63–4, 69–70, 80, 85, 127, 144, 171, 173, 177, 204
Wilfred II, bishop of York (d. 745/6) 63
Willibrord, missionary and archbishop of the Frisians (d. 739) 143, 173
Winwæd, battle of the (655) 174
Wood, Ian 76–7, 89
world-ages *see* ages of the world

York, bishopric and archbishopric of 62–3, 65–6, 209, 214–18